

Iraq slams Kuwait's 'hysterical' mistrust

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq accused Kuwait on Tuesday of adopting an "hysterical position" and seeking to isolate Baghdad despite overtures by other Gulf Arab monarchies.

An information ministry spokesman cited by the official INA news agency "expressed regret over the hysterical position" adopted by Kuwait at a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit which ended in Kuwait City on Monday.

The Iraqi spokesman accused Kuwait, which was occupied by Iraq from August 1990 to February 1991, of seeking to "muffle the reasonable and brotherly positions expressed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates."

In its final communiqué, the GCC, which is made up of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman, on Monday called on Iraq to show its peaceful intentions with "words and deeds."

But despite the declarations against Baghdad in the communiqué, cracks appeared between the members in their stance towards Iraq.

A proposal made during the summit by UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan to send a delegation to Baghdad "to press the Iraqi government to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions" was rejected.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul

Aziz Al Saud, heading the Saudi Arabian delegation, called for Gulf states to put the "past sufferings and events" behind them on arrival at the start of the summit on Saturday.

Iraqi parliament president to visit China

In another development, the Chinese foreign ministry said on Tuesday Iraq's National Assembly Chairman Saadoun Hammadi will make an official visit to China from Jan. 4-9.

Mr. Hammadi was invited by the standing committee of the Chinese parliament, spokesman Tang Guoqiang told a regular news conference.

The announcement of the visit came as the U.N. Security Council — of which China is one of the five permanent members — called on Baghdad Monday to grant U.N. disarmament inspectors "immediate and unconditional" access to Iraq's presidential palaces.

At the instigation of Russia and China, the Security Council has refrained from formally condemning Iraq for refusing U.N. experts access to the areas.

Moscow, Beijing and Paris insist on the need for dialogue with Iraq to resolve the crisis, while Washington and London — the two other permanent members of the Security Council — have urged stronger measures against Baghdad.

'Bomb explodes near Iranian opposition office'

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A bomb exploded near the Baghdad office of the People's Mujahadeen, but did not cause any casualties, the main armed Iranian opposition group said Tuesday.

"At 7:45 p.m. yesterday [Monday] a powerful bomb exploded at a deserted area in a street adjacent to the Mujahadeen's central office," the group said in a statement.

The Mujahadeen accused "terrorists dispatched by Iran's clerical regime" of responsibility for the attack.

Witnesses said the bomb had been placed in a deserted area about 50 metres from buildings housing the Mujahadeen offices.

"None of the Mujahadeen were hurt in this explosion, and no damage was inflicted on their office buildings," the statement said. But "the windows of a hotel and some houses and shops

were shattered." People's Mujahadeen chief Massoud Rajavi called in the statement for U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and members of the U.N. Security Council "to decisively condemn and punish the [Iranian] regime for its terrorist crimes."

The Mujahadeen said Friday that its security officers thwarted an attempt by Iranian agents the same day to fire rockets on its Baghdad headquarters.

In October, Iranian aircraft bombed two Mujahadeen bases in Iraqi provinces bordering on Iran, raids that Tehran said were defensive.

Iraq has protested the attacks and called for the lifting of the zones in the north and south of the country where its aircraft have been barred from flying since 1991 by U.S., British and French warplanes.



LEBANESE CROSSING: Residents of Jezzine and Kfar Falous meet on Tuesday on a mountain road to celebrate the Lebanese army's reopening of the Kfar Falous crossing. The crossing was closed in 1985 after Israeli forces occupied a self-declared security zone in south Lebanon, forcing Jezzine residents to take a circuitous route to parts of the country controlled by the Beirut government. Jezzine residents, who frequently witness clashes between pro-Iranian Hizbollah guerrillas and Israeli forces and their local militia allies, hope the re-opening of the crossing was a first step to end 12 years of isolation and almost daily violence (Reuters photo)

Sudan declares state of emergency in western states

KHARTOUM (AP) — Sudan has declared a state of emergency in four of its six western states as part of a crackdown against crime, the Sudanese news agency reported Tuesday.

Sudan's military leader, Gen. Omar Al Bashir, announced the measures Monday and said that under the new rules suspects will be brought before emergency tribunals.

The measures come amid an increase in armed robberies and escalating tribal conflicts in this poverty-stricken country.

In November, two men were sentenced to cross-limb amputation and another two to death after they were convicted of armed robbery in the western state of North Kordofan.

Mustafa Osman Ismail, a foreign ministry official, said Tuesday that Sudan would request aid from the United Nations and regional organisations to curb the violence.

It was not clear what type of aid Sudan would request.

Israeli army breaks up three Hamas cells near Bethlehem

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli army said Tuesday it had broken up three cells of the Islamist group Hamas which had been involved in attacks on Israeli vehicles outside the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

A total of 36 members of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) were arrested recently from the three cells in the villages of Zaatara and Bani Hassan outside Bethlehem, an army spokesman said.

The four-member cell from Zaatara had confessed under interrogation to committing

two shootings which caused no injuries or damage against Israeli cars outside a Jewish settlement near Bethlehem in May.

A number of weapons used in the shootings were seized when the activists were arrested, the spokesman said.

Members of the two cells in Bani Hassan confessed to involvement in 13 incidents in which firebombs were thrown at Israeli vehicles in the West Bank.

One of the Bani Hassan cells included former members of

the Fateh faction of the PLO who had joined Hamas, the spokesman said.

Israel has launched an extensive crackdown against Hamas, arresting hundreds of its members, particularly around Bethlehem, since two Hamas suicide bombings in Jerusalem in July and September.

Hamas, which has rejected President Yasser Arafat's self-rule deals with Israel, has led a campaign of violence since 1993 which has left scores of Israelis dead.

Security pact stalled due to Israeli opposition — Palestinian source

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A security agreement between Israel, the Palestinians and the United States that was slated to be finalised Monday has been postponed due to Israeli reservations, a Palestinian security source said.

"The Israelis said that they need more time to discuss the details and that Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu doesn't agree to some points," the source told AFP.

The three security teams were slated to hold talks Monday to complete the agreement but Israel asked to cancel the meeting, the security official said.

Israel has demanded firm action from the Palestinian

National Authority against Islamist activist groups as a precondition for further troop withdrawals from the West Bank called for in U.S.-sponsored peace accords.

The U.S. proposed the joint security pact as a means of achieving this.

"The Palestinian Authority insists on this agreement and considers it a good basis for security cooperation," the Palestinian official said.

"Netanyahu's refusal to agree on this is an attempt to keep the security pact in his hand and an excuse not to implement agreements, mainly the withdrawal," he added.

The Palestinians accuse Israel of using the security

argument to stall implementation of peace agreements already signed.

Mr. Netanyahu's rightwing cabinet agreed in principle earlier this month to a further pull-out from the West Bank but has yet to decide on its scope and timing.

The Palestinians have warned they will not accept any proposals which fall short of the withdrawals stipulated in the peace agreements. The U.S. has demanded Israel carry out a "significant and credible" withdrawal to advance the peace process.

stalled for nine months over Israeli rightwing policies and attacks against Israelis by Islamist activists.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran hails new GCC stand

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Tuesday welcomed a new conciliatory stand adopted by the Gulf Arab states, but reaffirmed its sovereignty over three strategic Gulf islands disputed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "We welcome the desire shown by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to boost relations with Iran," said foreign ministry spokesman Mahmud Mohammadi. "Iran also emphasises its position to strengthen ties with neighbouring countries, especially the Gulf states," he said, quoted by the official IRNA news agency. But the spokesman said "we stress the fact that the islands are Iranian." He called, however, for bilateral negotiations with the UAE "to reach an understanding," and urged the GCC to persuade the emirate to step forward. Leaders of six Gulf Arab states spoke of a "new page" in relations with Iran at the end of a summit in Kuwait on Sunday.

5 seriously injured in Libya plane crash

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Five people were seriously injured when a Libyan plane crash-landed while on a flight from Sirte to Tripoli, the official JANA news agency reported Tuesday. The news agency said the plane was forced to carry out an emergency landing because of a mechanical problem. It did not say when the incident occurred. "The five people aboard the plane, including the members of the crew, were seriously injured," JANA said. It said the plane was carrying out a cloud-seeding project.

'Lockerbie suspects would receive fair trial'

EDINBURGH (AFP) — A report by U.N. experts concluded that two Libyan suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am Airliner in which 270 people were killed would receive a fair trial in Scotland, officials said Monday. A spokesman for the prosecution service in Edinburgh said: "The Crown Office welcomes the report of the U.N. legal experts who, contrary to speculative and ill-informed reports, have concluded that the accused would receive a fair trial under the Scottish judicial system." He added: "Libya should now stop prevaricating and secure the appearance of the accused for trial." Pan Am Flight 103 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, on Dec. 21, 1988. Libya, which has called for the trial to take place in a neutral country, has been under a U.N. air and military embargo since 1992 because of its refusal to hand over the two suspects to the United States or Britain. Tripoli says the pair would not receive a fair trial in either country.

Bomb blast kills 9 in Algeria

ALGIERS (AFP) — Nine members of a single family died when a bomb exploded at their house at Ouled Allel near Algiers, Le Soir d'Algerie daily reported Tuesday. The family had just returned to the house Monday, having abandoned it after receiving threats from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) along with the 8,000 other members of the village, the newspaper said. The village was recaptured by Algerian government forces in September after being used as a stronghold by GIA militants who mined access roads and several houses. The army had carried out a demining operation in which a number of troops were killed. It subsequently urged the inhabitants of the village to return to their homes. Eight people died last Thursday near Ouled Allel in two bomb explosions, one in an abandoned house and the other in a wood.

Woman executed in UAE for killing husband

DUBAI (AFP) — A woman was executed Monday in Ras Al Khaima in the United Arab Emirates for killing her Emirati husband and burning his body, a newspaper reported Tuesday. Zaynab Ramadan Zaki was shot dead for fatally stabbing her Emirati husband, Abdullah Steiman, while he was sleeping in December 1991, Al Bayan newspaper reported. She had confessed to the murder but gave different explanations, variously saying that he beat her and that he had threatened to take another wife. Her brother was sentenced to 10 years in prison for helping to burn the body and hide it. The brother and sister are Arabs of foreign nationality, the press said.

Authorities seize New Year marijuana

CAIRO (AFP) — Thirty-four kilograms of marijuana which traffickers hoped to sell for holiday use have been seized in recent days in the northern Egyptian Delta, Al Ahram newspaper reported Tuesday. Aymam Mansour, an alleged drug baron, was arrested after police confiscated 23 kilograms of the drug, known here as "Bango," from his home in Meni-fiya province north of Cairo, the opposition paper said. In the neighbouring province of Qalubia, police arrested four other traffickers in possession of 11 kilograms of marijuana and three kilograms of hashish.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 Jonny Quest
14:30 Secrets of the Treasure Island
15:00 Art Box
15:30 Ministers Today
16:00 Border Town
16:30 Neighbours
17:00 French Programmes
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 Pop Music
20:30 One Christmas
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film — "Rent a Kid"
23:50 Christmas in Vienna
01:00 Christmas Eve Mass (Live from the Vatican)

PRAYER TIMES

05:06 Fair
06:28 (Sunrise) Duba
11:35 Dhuhr
14:19 Asr
16:42 Maghreb
18:05 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swefieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 671757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622666

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 5516245

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology
Skies will be partly cloudy and winds westerly moderate. In Aqaba, fine weather conditions will prevail, winds northerly moderate and seas calm.
Amman 04/13

Aqaba 09/21
Deserts 03/15
Jordan Valley 08/19

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 13, Aqaba 20 Humidity readings: Amman 71 per cent, Aqaba 38 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
Dr. Tawfiq Qub'ain 623029
Dr. Ghaleb Zawaideh 736011
Dr. Hisham Kan'an 790286
Dr. Khalid Asfour 699440
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 890280
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 276852
Al Quds pharmacy 1
ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad 985550
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate

Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 516615

Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali 6612637
Al-Ahli, Abdali 661646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602340/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)900990
IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)214111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (044)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44-532501.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

07:25 Damascus (RJ)
08:05 Larnaca (RJ)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:35 Frankfurt (RJ)
16:50 Istanbul (RJ)
17:05 Paris (RJ)
17:40 Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
17:45 Madrid, Vienna (RJ)
18:10 London, Rome (RJ)
18:10 London, Berlin (RJ)
23:10 Beirut (RJ)
01:30 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
04:20 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights

05:50 Bucharest (RO)
09:30 Cairo (MS)
09:30 Al 'Arish

MARKA AIRPORT (PF)

10:15 Doha, Al Hudaidah (TY)
10:30 Jeddah (SV)
10:50 Kuwait (KU)
13:10 Tunis (TU)
13:25 Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF)
13:50 Tel Aviv (LY)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
15:30 Algiers (AH)
16:05 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30 Athens (OA)
23:15 London (BA)
23:30 London, Beirut (BA)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:45 Aqaba (RW)
09:05 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

06:00 Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ)
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
09:45 Berlin, London (RJ)
11:00 Istanbul (RJ)
19:35 Beirut (RJ)
19:45 Colombo (RJ)
20:05 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)

20:15 Bombay (RJ)
20:30 New Delhi (RJ)
21:00 Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)
00:30 Cairo (RJ)
01:30 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights

00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
01:55 Bucharest (RO)
06:35 Larnaca (CY)
08:00 Beirut (ME)
08:25 London (BA)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
10:30 Al 'Arish (Marka Airport) (PF)
11:15 Al Hudaidah, Aden (TY)
12:00 Kuwait (KU)
12:00 Jeddah (SV)
14:10 Tunis (TU)
14:20 Sharjah (AH)
15:15 Bahrain, Muscat (GF)
15:10 Tel Aviv (LY)
15:30 Doha (QR)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
19:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF)

Royal Wings (RW)

06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 Aqaba (RW)
09:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)

Prince Ali celebrates 22nd birthday

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Ali Ben Al Hussein Tuesday celebrated his 22nd birthday.

He was born to His Majesty King Hussein and the late Queen Alia on Dec. 23, 1975 and received his elementary, junior, and secondary education at Islamic Scientific College and later at the American School and the International Baccalaureate School in Amman.

Prince Ali was enrolled at the Salisbury School in the United States, where he completed his secondary education and graduated in June 1993.

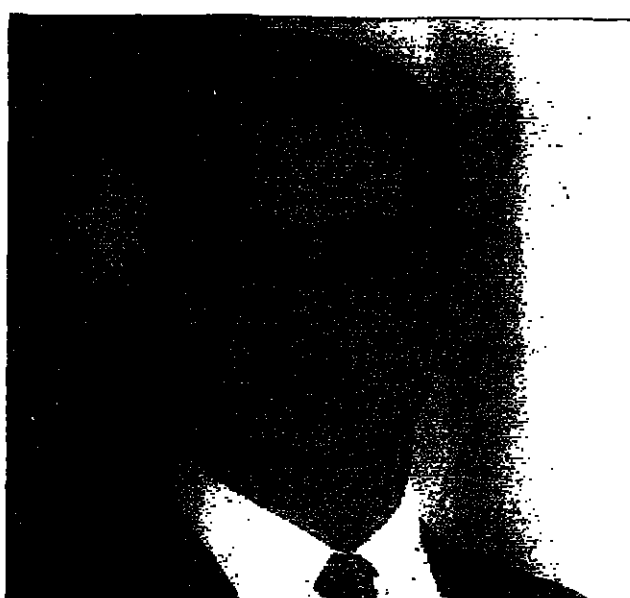
In 1994, Prince Ali joined Sandhurst Military College in the United Kingdom, where he

won the Brunel Medal of Distinction and graduated with honours.

He joined the special forces corps of the Jordan Armed Forces, took part in several military training courses, and received training in free-fall jumping from aircraft, as well as in diving.

In September 1995, Prince Ali was admitted to Princeton University and later to Columbia University in the U.S., where he currently studies political science and history.

Prince Ali is the honorary president of the Prince Ali Club for the Deaf and Mute. He is also president of the Royal Jordanian Paratroopers Club and the Al Jeel Al Jadeed Club.



Ministry announces plans to develop Jesus' baptism site to encourage religious tourism

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom plans to develop the baptism site of Jesus Christ on the eastern banks of the Jordan River by the year 2000 as part of a drive to encourage religious tourism, officials said Monday.

Access to the site, once a mined military zone, was made possible after Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, ending a 46-year state of war, they added.

Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Akel Biltaji said the site will help lure many of the several million travellers expected to visit holy sites in Jerusalem and elsewhere to mark the start of the Christian era's third millennium.

Many Muslims from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei have been flocking to Jordan in recent years on pilgrimage packages combining Saudi Arabia and Jerusalem, home to Islam's holiest shrines.

"Jordan's tourism potential would be significantly enhanced if the site where Jesus was baptised... could be included in their itinerary," Mr. Biltaji told the Jordan Times in an interview.

Jordan, counting on cultural and therapeutic tourism, is trying hard to diversify the industry that earns the Kingdom nearly 37 per cent of its foreign currency earnings.

But despite the boom triggered by the 1994 peace deal, tourism in Jordan has shown sensitivity to political uncertainty in the Middle East, worsened since the election of hard-line Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in May 1995.

The proposed baptism site,



A view of the Jordan River. The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has announced plans to develop the site of the baptism of Jesus to take advantage of expected religious tourism in 2000 (File photo)

to be developed at a cost of \$8.6 million, will attract both Christians and Muslims, since Jesus and John the Baptist feature in both religions.

The plan includes the creation of a "soft tourism super-structure," including a prayer hall, a mosque, a church, a baptism pool, and a resthouse. Visitors could take advantage of a string of new hotels planned for the Dead Sea shore in Sweimeh, five kilometres from the baptism site, Mr. Biltaji said.

"It will represent a unique attraction for visitors to the Holy Land, who could combine it with Jerusalem and Madaba," one tourism operator said. A church in the mosaic-rich city of Madaba houses the oldest known map of Jerusalem, while the pre-

sumed burial site of Moses is located nearby at Mount Nebo.

Israel currently has a baptism site on the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee. "But while [the Israeli] site is an artificial one, Jordan has the unique potential provided by a real and credible product...historically and religiously authenticated," Mr. Biltaji said.

The political tension in the Middle East soured a favourable outlook for Jordan's tourism industry in 1997, but a boom in hotel building is going ahead to cash in on a projected tourist influx by the year 2000, officials said.

Tourism revenues, which skyrocketed after the signing of the 1994 peace treaty, are not expected to exceed JD550 million this year, compared with a 14 per cent jump in 1996 to JD527 million.

Hostilities between Jordan and Israel once jeopardised the site's security, which is the most important attribute of tourism products, but now it can be developed into a strong and solid destination," Mr. Biltaji said.

The political tension in the Middle East soured a favourable outlook for Jordan's tourism industry in 1997, but a boom in hotel building is going ahead to cash in on a projected tourist influx by the year 2000, officials said.

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Jordan, Switzerland reschedule \$2.5 million of Kingdom's debt

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Switzerland Tuesday signed an agreement on rescheduling \$2.5 million of Jordan's debts to Switzerland.

The rescheduling agreement is in line with an accord reached last May between the Jordanian government and the Paris Club.

Under the agreement, Jordan is to pay this part of

the debt over forty semi-annual installments at an interest rate of 4.3 per cent, with the first installment to be paid on Oct. 31, 2001.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez and Switzerland's Ambassador to Jordan Gian Federico Pedotti.

After the signing ceremony, Mr. Hafez said Jordan

is bound to benefit from the rescheduling plan, since the Kingdom can build its foreign currency reserves in the time allotted to pay the debt, which will reduce the burden on the state's budget.

Mr. Hafez expressed Jordan's appreciation for the world community and the Paris Club for the response to Jordan's needs.

Jordan is indebted to

Switzerland by around \$69.6 million, of which \$45.2 million have already been rescheduled. Switzerland has decided to convert the rest of the debt into investments in the country's social and economic projects.

Last week, Jordan and Japan signed another agreement on rescheduling Jordan's \$65 million debt to Tokyo.

Medical association announces plans to sue health ministry for failing to implement plan

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Medical Association (JMA) board plans to sue the Ministry of Health and Medical Care for failing to implement an earlier agreement between the two sides providing for public sector doctors to receive 60 per cent of a fund comprising treatment fees paid by the public.

JMA President Basem Dajani said the agreement, which had been endorsed by a Royal Decree, provided for the doctors to receive 60 per cent of the JD793,000 fund as an incentive, and not 36 per cent as the ministry was offering them.

The courts should decide

whether the government can disregard the agreement and the Royal Decree on the incentive fund, he said.

Dr. Dajani spoke after a mediation committee led by former Minister of Health Zuhair Malhas announced that it had failed to persuade Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi to honour the agreement.

The minister wanted to deduct the cost of drugs and other services from the portion they were to receive, leaving the doctors with 36 per cent of the fund, according to Dr. Dajani.

The JMA, along with the pharmacists' and dentists' associations, last month staged sit-ins over several weeks to back demands for

better pay and working conditions, in addition to receiving their share of the fund.

They called off the strike, however, pending the outcome of the committee's mediation with the government and said they would accept the 60 per cent share of the fund as a first step before renewing their other demands, which include an increase of the professional allowance from 90 per cent to 120 per cent.

For his part, Dr. Kurdi said the doctors should accept the 36 per cent share for the time being, because the ministry is planning to implement a revision of the agreement early next year. He also promised that the

doctors will be offered training courses, as had been demanded by the strikers.

However, Dr. Dajani insisted that the agreement be implemented to the letter. He said if the government stops charging the public for medical treatment at its hospitals, the JMA board will instruct public sector doctors to call off their demand to receive the 60 per cent share of the fund.

The health professionals have not abandoned their earlier demands concerning better pay, training courses, and more overtime and professional allowances, he added.

Baq'a residents plan rally, circulate petition to protest deputy's Israel visit

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Angry residents in the Baqa'a refugee camp are planning to hold a rally Friday to protest the visit to Israel by Deputy Mohammad Ra'afat, whom they elected to Parliament with the second-highest number of votes in the Nov. 4 elections, camp leaders said Tuesday.

"The rally is nothing but an expression of our rejection for this visit," said Abdul Haleem Qaisbat, a community leader in the 120,000-resident camp.

Mr. Qaisbat told the Jordan Times that camp leaders have started collecting signatures from "thousands" of residents in the camp calling for Mr. Ra'afat's dismissal from the Lower House.

"The petition is to show the

House that we do not want to be represented by such a person," he said.

The visit of deputies Ra'afat and Hamadeh Fara'neh (Amman second district) drew a wide range of criticism in Jordan, especially in the refugee camps.

During their four-day visit to Israel, they met with Israeli Parliament (Knesset) Speaker Dan Tichon and other MKs.

The "private" visit was the first public encounter between Jordanian deputies and their Israeli counterparts since the signing of the October 1994 peace treaty between the two countries.

Many Parliament members in the Kingdom demanded the "immediate dismissal" of the two deputies from the 80-member House.

Atah Wahedih, a staff member in Mr. Ra'afat's cam-

paign, said many of those who took part in his campaign regret having helped him win the camp's seat.

"The visit is an unacceptable move. He did not ask anybody for advice before he left for Jerusalem," said Mr. Wahedih.

Former Islamic Action Front (IAF) Deputy Mohammad Oweideh, who represented the camp in the previous Parliament, said petitioning is not enough to sack Mr. Ra'afat.

"Lower House rules stipulate that two-thirds of the House must support a move to dismiss, and I believe that will not happen," said Dr. Oweideh.

"The move is merely symbolic," he added.

Residents of the camp said some people have distributed pamphlets and caricatures of

Mr. Ra'afat as a "Jewish rabbi."

Meanwhile, a statement by the "National Forces" in the Marka, Hashmi, Jabal Al Hussein, Mahata, and Nuzha areas, the regions in which Mr. Fara'neh gathered his votes, blasted the visit and said the two lawmakers no longer represent them.

The visit was "aimed at breaking the national and public barriers between the Jordanian and Israeli parliaments at a time when terrorist (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu has declared the West Bank as part of Israel," the statement said.

"The visit is a clear denial of national Palestinian and Jordanian policies and a violation of legal and national Palestinian rights," the one-page statement said.

Minister of health returns from visits to Yemen, Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi returned from visits to Saudi Arabia and Yemen Tuesday and announced that he had signed a protocol on cooperation in health-related fields with the Yemeni government.

Among other things, the protocol provides for dispatching specialised medical teams to work in Yemeni hospitals, exchanging expertise in drug production, and visits by Yemeni ministry of health officials to Jordanian pharmaceutical firms to negotiate drug purchases.

he said.

The two sides also agreed that Jordan will organise training courses for Yemeni health personnel and increase the level of cooperation between the Jordanian and Yemeni medical boards. Jordan will also send a team of health specialists to train Yemeni health workers in Yemen.

Dr. Kurdi said he met his Yemeni counterpart, Abdullah Nasher, and discussed scopes of cooperation in medical and health affairs and further organising the process of sending Yemeni patients to receive medical treatment at Jordanian private and public hospitals.

Also during his week-long trip, Dr. Kurdi held talks with Saudi officials on cooperation in medical and health domains.

Saudi Minister of Health Usama Shabakshi expressed his country's desire to engage the services of highly-qualified Jordanian doctors and nurses, as well as technicians working in X-ray units and laboratories, according to Dr. Kurdi.

Saudi government officials also expressed their readiness to facilitate bilateral cooperation, he said.

Proposed transport authority draws criticism

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Plans by the government to set up a new transport authority to regulate bus, service, and taxi operations in Amman have infuriated Jordan's impoverished bus commuters and drivers.

The gradual scheme calls for establishing a Public Transport Authority (PTA) by March 1999 to regulate and modernise operations and replace the bankrupt Public Transport Corporation (PTC), officials said Tuesday.

The PTC, posting monthly losses of JD100,000, has been the sole owner of concession rights of all routes in the Greater Amman Area (GAA) since its inception in the 1970s, they added.

The PTC's ageing fleet of 150 red-and-white striped buses currently cover 50 per cent of routes within GAA, while 13 private operators are running 500 smaller, modern buses under a 15-year concession granted seven years ago.

Many PTC employees fear losing their jobs after the corporation awards its operations to two or three private operators who will operate under PTA supervision.

"I've been working hard for 17 years," said 55-year-old PTC bus driver Ahmad Saleh, a father of eight.

"If they sack me from my job, this will be a disaster for me and my family."

"The private sector does not need an old man like me to drive a bus. Do you believe I can find a new job? I don't."

The government has said the new operators will take care of all PTC employees, while the Social Security Corporation will look after those who have reached retirement age.

Sa'id Salem, another PTC bus driver, said 90 per cent of citizens will be hurt by the major privatisation scheme.

"Private sector bus drivers do not respect people, their reckless driving and uncivilised actions have caused many deadly accidents and their only concern is collecting money to justify their salaries," he told the Jordan Times.

"I saw one private bus driver beating up a man because he was short of money," said Mr. Salem. "This would have never happened in a PTC bus because it is not a commercial service."

The PTC charges fees ranging between 50 fils and 150 fils, depending on the distance, while the private sector

operators charge higher fees — a problem for Jordan's poor bus commuters.

Despite their heavy dependence on the PTC, bus commuters have long complained of the company's unreliable, unsafe, and low-quality service.

Many commuters have nicknamed the buses the "government's mules" because they are strong, endure heavy traffic, pollute the air, and block streets when they stop.

The PTC awarded the private sector concession rights to operate 500 new buses after the 1990 Gulf crisis forced over 300,000 Jordanians to return from Kuwait, straining PTC operations.

"The terms of reference that were granted them were quite flexible because the government was in need of the service, and they happened to be running the profitable routes, unlike the PTC," one official said.

Many PTC commuters, bus drivers, and newspaper columnists have long criti-

cised the government's years of silence over the corporation's losses, blaming them on mismanagement and lack of proper maintenance.

But several drivers and maintenance officers disagree. "I believe our buses would be strong and in good condition if only they were treated well," said a maintenance worker.

"The government must intervene and support the PTA and modernise its buses, because no bus can help citizens like PTC buses, especially during rush hours."

But for many, such as downtown street vendor Bassem Atyeh, the friendly atmosphere inside PTC buses is irreplaceable.

"It allows you to hear common people discussing their problems and concerns," Mr. Atyeh said. "This is something you cannot enjoy in the private sector buses because you are frightened to death by their crazy speed and loud vulgar music," he said.

Officials said revenue from private bus operators was a

major source of income for the PTC, which was registering losses on all its routes.

"A consultant is currently restructuring all routes covered by the PTC to help define them into two or three regions and to prepare terms of reference for their operations, including frequencies of trips, types of buses, and rates," one official said.

"Once this is complete, the government will tender the operations and suitable operators will be chosen," said the official, requesting anonymity.

"They will offer modern, high-quality, and reliable services similar to those offered by the private sector company that has been running a shuttle bus from downtown Amman to the airport every 30 minutes in either direction," he said.

The PTA will control and regulate all transport in the GAA, including the buses, the 5,000 service taxis, and a similar number of private taxis before it expands its operations in the future to cover all of Jordan.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT

* Musical performance by Iraqi singer Salim Abdul Karim and his band at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Display of Bani Hamida handicrafts (rugs, cushions, and wall hangings) at Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until Jan. 5.

* "Modern Bulgarian Art" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Jan. 5.

* Works by about a hundred artists

from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).

* Paintings by Samia Zaru at Amman Bookshop, Jabal Amman, Third Circle, until Dec. 24.

* Exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

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Korean food talks slow over demand to North for monitoring

BEIJING (AP) — Talks between North and South Korean Red Cross officials on delivering food to the famine-stricken North slowed Tuesday over demands by the South for proof that all donations reach starving North Koreans.

After meeting for more than 90 minutes, the officials said they would add a third day of talks Wednesday. Chang Moon-ik, a spokesman for the South Korean Red Cross embassy in Beijing, said they had to consult with their headquarters before getting together again.

Mr. Chang told reporters there would be "domestic political repercussions" if the South Korean Red Cross failed to gain concessions from the North side about a better delivery system.

South Korean officials, worried that aid is being diverted to the North Korean military, want to send observers along with food shipments to ensure they reach their intended destinations.

Officials of both sides refused to disclose details of their emerging agreement during the talks at a Beijing luxury hotel.

The South Korean delegation demanded Monday that North Korea tighten monitoring and consider overland shipments through Panmunjom, the neutral village on the hostile nations' heavily armed border.

After the first meeting, delegation head Lee Byung-Woong said his Red Cross chapter hoped to match the 50,000 tonnes in food aid it has included in each of two aid shipments

to North Korea this year.

Mr. Lee acknowledged Monday that capitalist South Korea's economic turmoil might make donors less willing to contribute relief to the secretive, Stalinist North. South Korea's currency has lost half its value and stock prices have plunged.

North Korea's food shortage, in its third year, and its effect on society have worsened. International aid groups report that the health care system has collapsed and people malnourished for months, even years, are dying of what should be easily treatable infectious diseases.

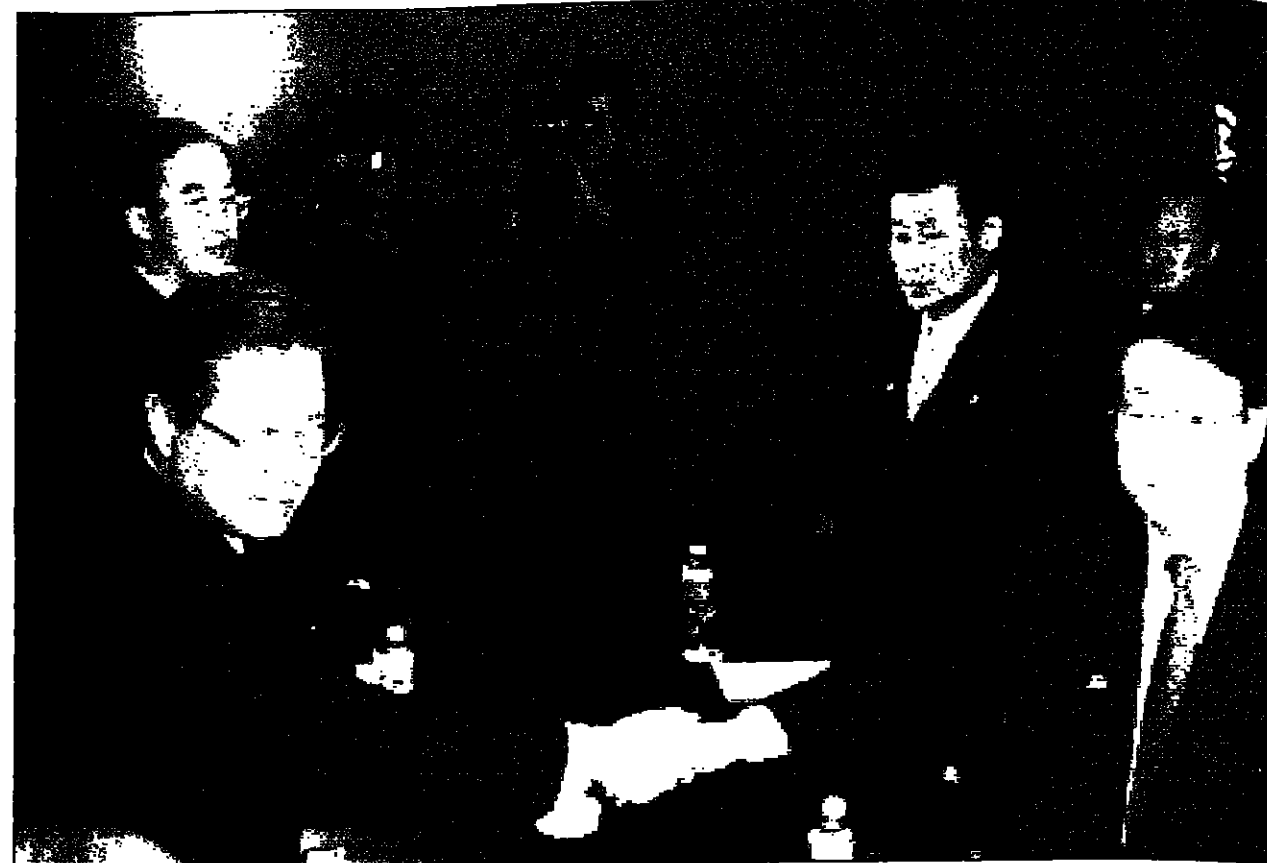
While last month's harvest temporarily refilled depleted government warehouses, North Korea still lacks 2 million of the 4.6 million tonnes of grain needed to give its people

subsistence.

International aid groups have commitments for 1 million tonnes of food, but are still looking for donors for the other million, said Johan Schaaf of the International Federation of the Red Cross.

Relief groups are also turning their attention to other effects of the famine. The International Red Cross launched an appeal last month for \$14.3 million to rebuild the health care system in two northern provinces.

But Mr. Lee, secretary-general of the South Korean Red Cross and chief delegate to the Beijing talks, said Monday that although South Korea has offered medicine, clothing and other assistance, North Korean delegates were mostly interested in food.



South Korean Red Cross chief delegate Choe Gyong-Rin (left) reaches across the negotiating table to shake hands with his North Korean counterpart Lee Byung-Woong before inter-Korean talks at a Beijing hotel (Reuters photo)

Lawyer says case against 'Carlos' was the work of secret agents

PARIS (AP) — A defence attorney for the man known as "Carlos the Jackal" Tuesday denounced what he called a criminal prosecution based on the "investigation of secret agents."

Lwyer Francois Honorat opened the last day of Ilich Ramirez Sanchez's triple murder trial by accusing prosecutors and judges of "marching" the defendant through the proceedings and presenting only "the appearance of proof."

The judges and jury members were expected to issue a verdict in the early evening on the guilt or innocence of Carlos in the deaths of two French investigators and a Lebanese citizen in a 1975 summer shootout.

Monday, prosecutor Gino Necchi said he would seek a life sentence for Carlos because the victims were unarmed targets.

Carlos, 48, had previously risked a maximum 30-year prison term if convicted in the killings of inspectors Raymond Dous and Jean Donatini and Michel Moukharbal, a Lebanese colleague of Carlos.

Mr. Necchi, along with lawyers for the families of the victims, denounced what they suggested was Carlos' cowardliness for allegedly killing unarmed men in a panic then failing to take responsibility for

his acts.

Francis Szpiner, lawyer for S.O.S. Attentats, a group which defends terrorism victims, said Monday in his final arguments he was "surprised" at the man who has proclaimed himself an "international revolutionary."

"You have defended yourself like a chicken thief and not like a revolutionary," Mr. Szpiner said. The so-called "Carlos myth" that has developed over the years, "is being whittled away" at the trial, he said.

Once one of the world's most wanted guerrilla, Carlos was captured in Khartoum, Sudan, Aug. 14, 1994, and taken to Paris by French agents.

He is widely accused of carrying out the 1975 seizure of OPEC oil ministers and was involved in the 1976 Palestinian hijacking of a French jetliner to Entebbe, Uganda, which ended with an Israeli commando raid.

The proceedings were twice suspended Monday because of new demands by the defence — a request to hear four new witnesses and a claim by Carlos that last Monday he was with a lawyer for an hour after his own attorney walked out in protest.

Presiding Judge Yves Corneloup dismissed both demands, which, if accepted, would have risked cancelling all ensuing debate over the past week.

The defence has sought since the start of the trial the presence of three eyewitnesses to the shootings, which took place in a small Latin Quarter apartment rented by a friend of Carlos.

The prosecution claims they were unable to find the people in question, all Latin American students studying in Paris at the time. Instead, the court has heard 22-year-old depositions from witnesses' accounts at the time of the shootings.

Prosecutors have also presented physical and circumstantial evidence: fingerprints on a whiskey bottle and glasses at the left bank apartment where the killings occurred; more fingerprints on a postcard addressed to a Venezuelan friend; compromising accounts of conversations from former friends and lovers, read Friday in court.

The trial has been repeatedly interrupted by the merry-go-round of defence lawyers who have come and gone and repeated demands for new information by the defence.

Carlos was convicted in absentia for the killings in 1992, but now that he is captured, French law dictates he be retried.

Plane crash-lands in Bangladesh, all on board survive

DHAKA (AFP) — All 89 passengers and crew aboard a Biman Airlines plane escaped death when their aircraft crash-landed in a marshy field in northeastern Bangladesh, officials said Tuesday.

Seventeen people were hospitalized after the Fokker 28 on a domestic flight from Dhaka crash-landed five miles from Sylhet airport at around 10:40 p.m. Monday (16:40 GMT). Civil Aviation Minister Alamgir Khan Mohiuddin said.

Mr. Alamgir said nobody was killed, "apparently due to (the) ready wit of the pilot and crew members."

Sylhet airport Manager Fazlul Karim quoted pilot M.A. Mannan as saying the plane had hit an air pocket at low altitude while preparing to land. Mr. Mannan is being treated in hospital for minor head injuries.

The aircraft skidded 500 metres before it came to a halt, with its undercarriage and one wing destroyed. Biman Engineer Khairul Islam told AFP the plane was damaged beyond repair, he added.

Mr. Alamgir refused to comment on the possible cause of the accident, saying a five-member committee, comprising Biman, civil aviation and air force officials, had been ordered to look into the incident.

"At 10:36 p.m. we got a message that the Biman flight is missing... At around 12 midnight we came to know that it ground-landed at a marshy crop field (a) few kilometres away from the runway," he told reporters.

He meanwhile praised villagers who rushed to help rescue personnel from the local airport shortly after the crash. "It was a miracle that no one was critically injured," fire brigade official Mozammel Hossain said.

"We could not trace the aircraft for more than two hours until we got the information that it had crashed in marshland some five miles away from the airport," an airline official said.

The airport lies close to a hilly region which is often fogbound.

"A primary investigation has been ordered," airport director Wing Commander Aminur Rashid said. He gave no details.

Most of the passengers were expatriate Bangladeshis returning from London, the officials said. Many members of Britain's Bangladeshi community are originally from the Sylhet area. Of the 17 in hospital, four were members of the aircraft crew.

Additional rescue officials were making their way to Sylhet, some 300 kilometres from Dhaka.

Clinton tells Bosnia: U.S., and its demands, will not go away

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — President Bill Clinton came and went like a whirlwind. He charmed Sarajevans, cheered U.S. troops — and challenged Bosnia's leaders to give their people responsible government.

Mr. Clinton was already back in Washington late Monday night. In his wake, the question remained whether his 11-hour visit will achieve more than the parade of diplomats who have marched through Bosnia for years, first trying to end its war, then trying to strengthen its shaky peace.

Mr. Clinton laid down his challenge Monday in an address carried live over Bosnian state television and recorded for later transmission in the Serb-ruled half of the country. The speech was full of images meant to inspire the quest for peace.

His visit to Sarajevo's slowly mending streets encouraged Bosnians to reflect on how things had changed for the better since a NATO-led force arrived to monitor the November 1995 Dayton accord that ended the 3 1/2-year war. Sarajevans sought out the president to express their gratitude.

In private, the talk was much tougher than it was in public, a reflection of the hard work that remains to make Bosnia a country, rather than two antagonistic halves ready to finish their fight after NATO leaves.

Mr. Clinton told political leaders they owed it to Bosnia's war-weary population "to bring out the best in people — acting in concert, not conflict. Overcoming obstacles, not creating them. Rising above disputes, not fuelling them."

For all his pleading with Bosnia's leaders to find common ground, perhaps the newest — and most important — note Mr. Clinton struck was that the United States would remain involved in Bosnia for a long time to come — and would continue to demand progress.

Just last week, he announced that U.S. troops would stay beyond their planned 1998 withdrawal date. Monday, he said they would remain in Bosnia as long as necessary to cement the peace.

Mr. Clinton told hundreds of U.S. soldiers in Tuzla "it's imperative that we not stop (until) ... the peace here has a life of its own, until it can endure without us."

"We have worked too hard to let this go," he said.

Mr. Clinton said army

Gen. Wesley Clark, NATO's supreme commander, was already headed back to Brussels to work on a more specific definition for the new NATO mission.

"I think as long as the American people think we've got a defined mission and we're not settling in for a permanent occupation of the country ... I think it will be all right," Mr. Clinton told reporters on the presidential jet air force one En Route back to Washington late Monday.

Mr. Clinton's advisers said he bluntly told the three quarrelling members of Bosnia's presidency, Muslim Alija Izetbegovic, Serb Momcilo Krajisnik, and Croat Kresimir Zubak, to set aside differences and rebuild their government.

Mr. Clinton's National Security Adviser Sandy Berger told reporters that the president didn't want a "feel-good" meeting. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said such candidates would bring results.

"There is work to be done, and the momentum has to be maintained, but they have to do heavy lifting, and we are going to keep pressing ... about what has to be done," she said.

The meeting turned tense when the issue of war criminals came up. Most of the indicted war crimes suspects who remain free are Serbs.

Mr. Clinton aides said Mr. Krajisnik — who is loyal to the top suspect, Radovan Karadzic — and his rival Biljana Plavsic fell silent when Mr. Clinton reminded them of their commitment under the Dayton accords, which ended ethnic warfare in the former Yugoslavia, to turn suspects over.

Ms. Plavsic, the Bosnian Serb president, urged Mr. Clinton to be patient.

"Slowly, one can expect results, but certain things cannot be implemented quickly," she said.

The issue of war crimes suspects is difficult for Ms. Plavsic. She distanced herself from Mr. Karadzic and Mr. Krajisnik this year, but is vulnerable to charges that she has sold out to the United States and its allies.

Turning over any suspects could be interpreted as proof that she has betrayed the Serb cause.

Just last week, NATO forces captured two Croat war crimes suspects who were then sent to The Hague for hearings before an international tribunal.

Sierra Leoneans wary after reported coup plan in Nigeria

FREETOWN (AFP) — News of an alleged weekend bid to oust Nigerian junta leader General Sani Abacha was met here by Nigerians and Sierra Leoneans alike with scepticism, cynicism and irony.

Freetown residents who have borne the brunt of Nigerian military efforts to unseat Sierra Leone's junta were particularly suspicious over the timing of the news, just 10 months before Gen. Abacha has pledged to hand back power to elected civilian leaders.

A Freetown lawyer dismissed the development as "unlikely to have taken place."

"It would have been interesting to see how other states in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) would have reacted if the alleged coup had succeeded," pondered one university lecturer who had just returned from a sabbatical at the University of Lagos.

The 16 ECOWAS states were unanimous and unprecedented in their vehement condemnation of the May 25 coup in Sierra Leone, even though more the half the heads of ECOWAS states first came to power through similarly unconstitutional means.

"I foresee an attempt to forestall a return to democratic rule to Gen. Abacha's transitional programme," said one Nigerian trader, referring to a timetable slated to culminate in October 1998 with a handover to democratic rule in Nigeria. "Abacha is at it again to silence all opposition to his one-man strongarm rule," added the trader.

"Would they have also ordered a military build-up to reinstate Gen. Abacha as they are currently doing in Sierra Leone?" asked the lecturer, referring to the 10,000 Nigerian troops deployed here under the banner of the regional intervention force ECOMOG.

"We are fed up of hearing about coups and counter coups just as we were all looking forward to a return to civilian government," said textile dealer Babatunde Adebayo.

"Next we shall hear of military officers being shot by firing squad or getting lengthy jail sentences. When will we stop killing each other for one reason or the other?" added Mr. Adebayo.

"I suspect that Abacha, the old fox, is at it again to wipe out those military officers who are well-liked by the ranks," mused Alhaji Dufe.

The Freetown junta led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma has yet to react officially to the reported Nigerian coup attempt.

Mystery disease kills 140 Kenyans in 3 days

NAIROBI (AFP) — A mystery disease triggering diarrhoea, vomiting and bleeding from all orifices has claimed the lives of more than 140 people in eastern Kenya since the weekend, the local press said Tuesday.

Newspaper reports quoted the eastern provincial medical officer, Hassan Abdi, as suggesting that the disease was haemorrhagic fever spread by a species of the anopheles mosquito, which also carries the malaria virus.

Provincial Commissioner Maurice Makhana told reporters in the northeastern provincial capital Garissa Monday that the epidemic had killed 73 people in the town and another 70 in Wajir, further north.

"We are courting a disaster.

If this disease spreads to other districts, all our people may perish. We urgently need medical supplies and professionals to treat the disease," Mr. Makhana told the Daily Nation.

Mr. Abdi said blood samples from ailing people had been sent for analysis in Nairobi.

Kenya's eastern and north-eastern districts have been hit by severe flooding which has destroyed infrastructure and caused serious food shortages. U.N. and other relief agencies have set up a base in Garissa to airlift food to flood-ravaged camps, where 123,000 refugees from neighbouring countries have been cut off since early November and thousands of Kenyan nomadic tribes also suffering from the effects of the floods.

Russian hunters kill man-eating tiger

MOSCOW (AP) — A government-sponsored hunting team shot and killed a tiger that was blamed for the deaths of two people earlier this month in Russia's far east, a news report said Tuesday.

The tiger mauled and ate one man on Dec. 3 and killed a second man on Dec. 15 in the northern Primorye region, an area along Russia's south-

east coast. Following the second death, authorities formed a team of hunters to track down the tiger.

The team found and shot the tiger Monday, the Interfax news agency reported.

Russia's far eastern tigers are nearing extinction because of poaching and human activity in their forest habitat.

Fear of bird flu widespread in Hong Kong as clinic visits climb

HONG KONG (AP) — Clutching four bottles of brightly coloured medicine, Yau Chi-Ying says he brought his 4-year-old son to a government clinic after the boy ran a fever for a week.

"But he hasn't got bird flu," Mr. Yau said Tuesday, seemingly relieved.

Fear of the influenza A H5N1 virus is spreading in Hong Kong and more people are visiting the doctor, health workers say.

The virus, which has circulated in poultry for decades, claimed a human victim in May in the first known case of human infection.

In all, of nine confirmed and two suspected cases, three victims have died and one is seriously ill. Five are hospitalised in satisfactory condition and only two have recovered.

There is no vaccine available and virtually no one has immunity to the virus. Doctors don't know how people are catching it.

Waiting for his wife at the Sai Ying Pun Jockey Club outpatient clinic in a working-class neighbourhood, the 37-year-old Yau waved the bag of medicines at his two children to indicate he'd come because of them.

"I am afraid of them catching bird flu. Everybody is

worried. My son has a fever, he's had a fever for about a week, so we came to get medicine," Mr. Yau said.

Bright-eyed Chi-Yu looks healthy enough, but he coughs suddenly as he leans on his father's knee.

The doctor said he didn't think either Chi-Yu or his 8-year-old sister, Wing-See, had the H5N1 virus, their father said. "Just a normal fever and flu," Mr. Yau laughed.

The clinic's eight doctors were working flat out seeing 90 patients each per day, the maximum permitted number, said nurse Rebekah Yue.

"We are getting more flu patients," she said. "Maybe because the weather has changed in these last few days, from warm to cold."

On the wall near her, leaflets informing the public about H5N1 and other flus are stacked on a tray.

"Flu is most common from February to July," they say — not December.

Said Ms. Yue: "People are not saying, 'so what.' They are worried in their hearts, even when they don't say it out loud."

Outside the clinic, Lau Cheuk-Wat opined that Hong Kong kids' lack of exercise and their fast food diet were making them physically weak and vulnerable to disease.

"The kids in Hong Kong don't exercise enough and they eat too much McDonalds," Mr. Lau said.

Five of the nine confirmed cases, and two of the three deaths, are children aged 13 and under. Experts are concerned children may be passing the virus by intimate contact during play, when they cough on each other or in other poor hygiene practices.

"People who have children, they're worried, because kids seem to be getting it easier," Mr. Lau said. But he said he wasn't too worried — his youngest son is 17.

Waiting her turn to see a doctor, Fanny Lam said she'd come to the clinic because her 4-year-old daughter Natalie had a cough.

"I'm a little afraid, but I'm not cooking chicken at home and we don't eat duck," said Mrs. Lam. She wasn't taking any other precautions, she said.

The government says it is not dangerous to eat poultry, but many people are staying away from buying live birds at the market, where they are slaughtered on the spot and taken home for cooking.

In a fatalistic streak common in Hong Kong, Mrs. Lam says, "if there's a disease out there, you can catch it, wherever you go."

Aung San Suu Kyi speaks of isolation

LONDON (AFP) — Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has never seen a Rangoon shopping mall, and barely leaves her house, she said in an interview published Tuesday.

"I hardly go out. I do all my work from the house," she told the British daily The Guardian in its second interview with the National League for Democracy leader.

"They make it impossible for me to leave Rangoon. I have never seen any of these shopping malls."

Suu Kyi also spoke of her father General Aung San, martyr of Burma's independence struggle, and how successive military governments have sought to diminish his role.

"I suppose they want to play down the role of my father," she said. "But they have not been able to do that entirely. They can do anything they like to me but they can't touch my father."

She added she never thought she had to live up to her father's example because "I never thought I could reach the heights that he did."

Monday, Aung San Suu Kyi said a drive launched last month by the Burmese junta to root out corruption in its ranks had not led to any change in its attitude towards the opposition.

Tuesday she added: "They are not at all anxious to give up power. The question is whether world opinion together with the economic strictures will force the military in the coming months to change their attempts at cynical manipulation of their contracts with the opposition into something real."

Handicapped son of Indian priest 'chained up for 25 years'

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A Hindu temple priest has kept his mentally-impaired son chained up in a single room for 25 years. The Times of India reported Tuesday.

It said Sampath Kumar, a 42-year-old son of a priest in the southern Indian city of Bangalore, had not been allowed out of doors since he was a teenager.

One of his relatives told The Times: "We used to take him to the movies 25 years ago, but now we are afraid he will bite or hurt someone or escape or injure himself."

He said Mr. Kumar had been chained to a window in his father's home, inside the temple complex, after he failed to respond to medical treatment.

"We took him to several doctors 25 years ago, but they said there was no hope," he said.

"It's been about 25 years since Kumar last went out."

A Times photograph showed a naked Kumar chained to a window.



Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (right) shakes hand with Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah at a local function in Karachi (Reuters photo)

Supreme Court approves permanent removal of chief justice

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Months of judicial wrangling that deeply divided the Supreme Court came to an end Tuesday with a court ruling that the former Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah was wrongly promoted in 1994.

Mr. Shah was removed as chief justice earlier this month following an acrimonious power struggle with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his two-thirds majority in parliament.

President Farooq Leghari, who came out in favour of Mr. Shah,

resigned accusing Mr. Sharif of trying to consolidate all power in his hands. The squabble virtually crippled the country, sent the stock market into convulsions and had many people fearing the military would step in.

Tuesday 10 Supreme Court justices ruled that Mr. Shah was promoted out of turn ahead of more senior judges, the Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

The court also suspended all judgments handed down by Mr. Shah since Nov. 26 when he was sus-

pended as chief justice. His suspension came in the middle of a feud with Mr. Sharif.

He refused to accept it and continued to hear cases as chief justice until Dec. 2 when he voluntarily stepped down.

However, Mr. Sharif still faces contempt of court charges laid during Mr. Shah's tenure. If he is found guilty he could be removed from power.

The prime minister also faces several charges of corruption, resurrected by Mr. Shah during the height of the feud.

China rejects call for Tibetan independence referendum

BEIJING (AP) — China Tuesday rejected a call by an international group of jurists for a Tibetan independence referendum, dismissing as slander its claims of human rights abuses in Tibet.

"The so-called self-determination is out of the question. Tibet is a part of China," Tang Guoqiang, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said at a twice-weekly press briefing.

The International Commission of Jurists, based in Geneva, called Monday for a U.N.-sponsored referendum in Tibet on whether to remain under Chinese control. The group said repression in Tibet has "increased steadily" since early 1996 and that torture was wide-

spread.

In a 365-page report, the group said an intensive political reeducation drive is under way in monasteries. It said Buddhist nuns and other women had been raped using cattle prods, and that prisoners have died in recent years from torture or negligence. It called for a special U.N. human rights investigator for Tibet.

Chinese Communist troops arrived in Tibet in 1950 to assert Beijing's claim to the territory. Its ruler, the Dalai Lama, fled into exile in India in 1959. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his non-violent campaign for Tibetan autonomy.

Beijing says it has spent millions of dollars raising Tibetan living standards

and restoring Buddhist monasteries.

Tibetan activists say other important sites have been destroyed and economic benefits go mostly to ethnic Chinese settlers.

The Chinese government has denied accusations of torture and religious persecution. It has blocked U.N. attempts to investigate, rejecting outside interest in human rights in Tibet as subversive interference.

"Tibet has since ancient times been an inalienable part of Chinese territory, and no foreign country has the right to interfere in Tibetan affairs," Mr. Tang said.

"This report, in total disregard of the territorial sovereignty of China, openly propagandises for Tibetan

self-determination, and slanderously said China violated human rights in Tibet. We express our strong objection about that."

The jurists' group said the Tibetan referendum could result in independence, self-rule as part of China, a continuation of the current situation or any other status chosen by Tibetan voters.

The authors of the report visited the Dalai Lama in India, but said they were not allowed to travel to Tibet.

Mr. Tang accused them of ignorance of contemporary Tibetan affairs.

"Anyone with basic knowledge about Tibet would not draw the same conclusion," he said. "Their position is mistaken."

Supreme Court allows Zardari to take senate oath

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan's Supreme Court Tuesday turned down a government attempt to overturn a judicial ruling allowing the imprisoned husband of former premier Benazir Bhutto to be sworn in as a senator.

The high court in Mr. Bhutto's home province of Sindh Saturday ordered the government to arrange for Asif Ali Zardari to be taken from Karachi to the senate in Islamabad for the oath-taking.

The government challenged the order before a two-judge Supreme Court bench presided over by acting Chief Justice Ajmal Mian. Mr. Zardari, who was elected from jail

in March, wants to claim his seat so that he can vote in the Dec. 31 election of Pakistan's new president by the federal parliament and provincial assemblies.

Former President Farooq Ahmed Leghari resigned on Dec. 2 following a power struggle with Prime Minister

Nawaz Sharif. Mr. Zardari, who was detained the day Mr. Bhutto's government was dismissed in November 1996, is facing charges of complicity in the September 1996 death in a police shootout of Mr. Bhutto's estranged brother Mir Murtaza.

Relatives of victims of Indonesia jet crash mourn in river ceremonies

MAKARTI, JAYA, Indonesia (AP) — Sobbing as they burned incense and cast flower petals into a murky river, relatives of a victim of a Singapore-owned jetliner crash held a Buddhist mourning ceremony Tuesday on a boat.

"Please come back. I want to bring you back home," said Seow Poh Eng, whose brother was among 104 people on board a SilkAir Boeing 737 that plunged into the river on Sumatra Island, All died.

Relatives prayed that divers will find the body of 42-year-old Seow Poh Ting of Singapore, whose credit card was found in the muddy, fast-flowing Musi River.

So far, frogmen with flashlights have pulled up 28 sacks of unidentified human remains, police Sgt. Husen Achmad said. The remains were sent to a morgue in Palembang, a city near the swampy site where the Singapore-owned plane went down Friday.

Tuesday, searchers found aircraft pieces as well as the passport of the Singaporean pilot, Capt. Tsu Way Ming, 41, about 2.5 km east of the crash site in a muddy rice field.

Authorities are storing plane debris in a Palembang airport hangar as they try to find out what caused the crash. Divers have recovered gears, springs and mechanical parts believed to be part of the plane's two General Electric-made engines.

They also hope to locate the "black box" flight recorders that may hold vital clues. Two local shamans who say they can detect wreckage with their supernatural powers are helping the recovery teams.

Witnesses in the village of Makarti Jaya said the plane exploded before hitting the water.

Teams have extended their search over a 5-kilometre stretch of river as well as an 8-kilometre land corridor tracing the final seconds of the plane's flight path, said First Adm. Rosihan Arsyad of the Indonesian Navy.

At the crash site, as army helicopters clattered overhead, a friend of Seow Poh Ting said he and the victim's relatives were frustrated that his body had not been found.

"We need to get his soul back to the family," said Danny Aw. "We feel very bad that there is no

body to mourn over."

On the deck of a nearby patrol boat, another group of mourners sang Protestant hymns and tossed bundles of flowers into the water.

A pile of mangled aircraft parts lay nearby in the boat, along with passengers' batik clothing and a small plastic bag of human remains.

The New Paper, a Singapore newspaper, said most relatives agreed that a mass burial would be best if the recovered body parts are unidentifiable. But it was not known if the ceremony would be at the crash site or in Singapore, home to 46 of the victims.

An Indonesian Navy minesweeper with sonar equipment was expected to arrive at the site Wednesday from Surabaya on eastern Java Island, 910 kilometres away. Officials say its powerful sonar will pinpoint many pieces of wreckage.

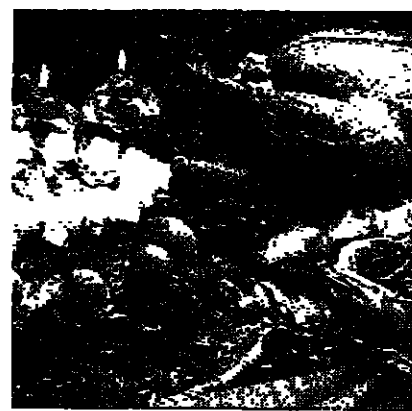
The 10-month-old plane crashed about 460 kilometres northwest of Jakarta. It had left the Indonesian capital bound for Singapore.

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Actress awarded \$5 million for firing over pregnancy

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hunter Tylo's biggest role so far appears to be that of a pioneer.

The actress whose pregnancy got her fired from TV's steamy soap "Melrose Place" before she filmed her first scene was awarded \$4.9 million Monday by jurors who agreed she was wrongfully terminated.

Attorneys for the show's producer, Spelling Entertainment Group and Spelling Television Inc., immediately promised an appeal.

The breach-of-contract and pregnancy discrimination lawsuit provided a twist to more typical legal battles involving the workplace, focusing attention on the importance of Hollywood places on appearance.

Ms. Tylo pronounced the verdict a victory "for every woman, for every child that's not born." The 34-year-old

actress had said one of the producers of the Fox TV show said: "Why doesn't she just go out and get an abortion? Then she can work."

The producers said they had a legal right to fire her because she couldn't realistically play what a defence attorney called a "vixen, seductress, adulteress" while her pregnancy showed.

But Juror Pete Ortiz said the panel agreed that Ms. Tylo could play sexy Taylor McBride despite her pregnancy.

"We believe they violated the contract," Ms. Ortiz said. "We felt she could play a vixen — that's a word that came up during our deliberations — and that she could do the job."

Added Freddie Moore, a female juror: "Not being pregnant is not a qualification to have this job."

Ms. Tylo — now in her ninth month of another pregnancy — wore tight miniskirts to court each day to underscore her point that she could be pregnant and sexy at the same time.

"I know a lot of actresses who are afraid to announce that they are thinking about having children because they are afraid of being written out or written down, or whatever," Ms. Tylo said outside court. "I hope it gives other actresses confidence to know producers are not going to have that ground to stand on anymore."

The Superior Court jury of 10 women and two men ordered the producers to pay \$4 million for emotional distress and \$894,601 for economic loss.

Some insiders doubt the big award will affect the average Hollywood producer.

"Every situation is different,"

said Mike Fenton, a casting director who works primarily in feature films. "No matter what we say about Hunter Tylo, if a young woman comes along and is visibly pregnant and it doesn't work for the piece, even if a deal is made, I think they would let her go."

Katherine Moore, a spokeswoman for the 90,000-member Screen Actors Guild, said she knows of no other claims filed with the union regarding pregnancy and acting roles, making it difficult to assess the scope of the problem. The union had supported Ms. Tylo's position throughout the trial.

The "Melrose Place" producers said a clause in the contract allowed them to fire Ms. Tylo if her appearance changed, and argued that pregnancy-discrimination law carves out an exception for actresses because of the need for believability.

Jordan Times

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Institutions for all times

THE DIRECT intervention of the Royal Palace into the conditions at the Salt prison is a milestone in the Jordanian human rights process. The families of the prisoners and detainees at the jail had appealed to His Majesty King Hussein to intervene to improve what they described as "inhuman conditions" there. The relatives had earlier appealed to the government to do the same thing but apparently nothing was achieved. Having exhausted all avenues for remedies, the some 100 family members of the prisoners decided to take their case directly to the King where they found an effective response.

In the absence of an appointed ombudsman to look into and correct problems and abuses in the human rights field, victims are forced to go all the way to the Royal Palace as the fact was in the Salt prison case. For instance, among the detained there allegedly are political prisoners who should be protected in accordance to both domestic and international law. Another example was that one of the prisoners was sentenced to life imprisonment for an attempted murder, a severe punishment that can hardly be justified under any judicial norms. The irregularities that are found at the prison need to be looked at from many angles not least of which is our treaty obligations which are binding on us and should have the effect of law.

This is where our judiciary and prison authorities should rise up to their responsibilities by observing international standards. Jordan is a special place, an oasis of peace in a region where laws are flouted everyday and the administration of justice leaves much to be desired. We cannot expect the Monarch or His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan to intervene each time there is a complaint about human rights violations. Our country needs proper institutions to take care of such violations whenever and wherever they occur.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Nazih decried a decision by the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company to lift the subsidy on diammonium phosphate fertiliser which it sells to local farmers, saying that the increase will further burden the farmers with added expense. Nazih said the company's reasoning in lifting the subsidy was that some farmers were smuggling fertilisers abroad in order to fetch higher prices and it wanted to put an end to the practise. The price hike on a tonne of this kind of fertiliser was JD70 which, Nazih said, is too much for the already indebted farmers and will certainly be reflected in the price of output and weakening Jordanian agricultural products' competitiveness abroad. He said the JPMC has promised to discuss this question with the Ministry of Agriculture and with the Ministry of Industry and Trade while the farmers are put on hold waiting for an outcome which might take months. The writer said the government can deal with the smuggling in other ways and prevent any exports of this vital commodity rather than allow the company to resort to this unreasonable and illogical measure.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud said there are still no signs that the government will keep its promises and apply the national health insurance plan as of the beginning of the new year. There are no serious preparations towards the implementation of this vital project which would greatly benefit the majority of people, who are mostly from limited-income groups, Daoud said. The latest decision by the Jordan Medical Association to increase the fees of doctors and hospital charges made it increasingly difficult for the majority of the population to obtain proper medical treatment in private hospitals, said the writer who claimed that many people resort to borrowing to pay the hospital bills. At the same time, the government has not yet carried out a public awareness campaign on the benefits of a national health insurance system nor did it make arrangements with the various institutions to deduct a reasonable amount from their employees' salaries to apply to the insurance plan because naturally the government can by no means shoulder the burden alone, according to the writer. He said that if the official promises are to be fulfilled serious steps have to be taken immediately and speedily and with the involvement of all private and public organisations.

Washington Watch

Greater, more decisive pressure on Israel required

By Dr. James Zogby

ISRAEL'S PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu showed up empty handed for his meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright last week. Netanyahu complained that his government could come to no consensus on how much land to return to the Palestinians as part of a long-delayed redeployment. While there are competing redeployment maps being proposed by various cabinet members, the Israeli premier has noted that a group of 17 hardline members of his coalition government has threatened to bring down his 18-month-long rule if he agrees to any pull-back.

The U.S. decision to give Netanyahu one more month will be criticised as weak, but it was based, policymakers say, on an assessment of political realities. The U.S. message to Israel's Likud-led government has succeeded in producing a bitter internal debate over redeployment. Despite the threats of some, all Israelis now accept the fact that Netanyahu will inevitably be forced to agree to some withdrawal from the West Bank. It is also clear that this Israeli redeployment proposal will be small and wholly unacceptable to the Palestinians.

The fact that this expected and insignificant redeployment has caused so much internal dissension within Israel (and maybe result in the collapse of the coalition government) establishes the fact that Israel today is not ready for peace — and the Netanyahu government, despite its verbal commitments to the contrary, does not want a real peace.

The commitment to Eretz Israel still runs deep among too many Israelis. The armed settler movement, inspired in its secular and religious wings by a fanatic uncompromising zeal, already has assassinated one prime minister and murdered scores of Palestinians. Their pledge to resist any withdrawal and to use force, if necessary, to stop any plan to abandon existing settlements makes them a force to be reckoned with by any Israeli government.

Shimon Peres' recent speeches to the effect that if he were still prime minister he would have moved forward to

implement withdrawals must raise questions. Based on past experience, a Labour-led government would have fared no better.

In constructing settlements throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, past Israeli governments were not only staking a claim to occupied Palestinian land, they were attempting to create irreversible facts on the ground to impede future governments from withdrawing from those lands. In addition, the fact that many of the most controversially placed settlements are populated by armed settlers with extremist ideologies only serves to compound this problem.

Israel dug a deep hole for itself and is digging still deeper. The pace of settlement building increased during the last Labour government and continues to grow during the Netanyahu government. From 1992 to 1996, the settler population in the West Bank grew by 50 per cent! There are currently 8,000 new housing units under construction in the West Bank (not including occupied East Jerusalem), enough to increase the settler population by 20 per cent. In addition, the government is spending millions in the form of tax breaks, subsidies and loans to entice settlers into the West Bank.

With such a determined settlement expansion programme under way, how can Israel's commitment to peace be believed?

Only by forcing Israelis to end their ideological attachment to Eretz Israel can peace move forward. It is here that the burden shifts to the United States. Giving the prime minister yet another month and maintaining subtle but real pressure may force the Netanyahu government to agree to withdraw from a few percentage points of land here or there. But to move the process forward towards resolution, greater and more decisive pressure will be required. What is needed is the type of pressure that will force the Israeli government not only to take a "time out" in settlement building, but evacuate and dismantle settlements. The illusion of the settlers and anti-peace Israelis

that they could sustain Eretz Israel was fed by several U.S. administrations and congresses.

The settlements that must be evacuated never should have been built. They were and still are illegal, but the change in U.S. policy, especially during the Reagan era, emboldened Israelis to press on with this expansion. The U.S. is now dealing with a problem for which it bears some responsibility. The only way out of the dilemma is to reverse the way we got into the dilemma in the first place. Only sustained pressure can change attitudes and force Israeli society to make choices that until now they have not had to make.

The U.S. administration is correct to assess political realities both in Israel and or the U.S. domestic scene as it calculates its next move. But if the United States fails to acknowledge both the danger posed by Israeli expansion and Israeli extremists and the fact that they must be confronted as directly as Palestinians are asked to confront their extremists, or if the U.S. fails to calculate the political reality among Palestinians or the Arab World in general, then those calculations will fall short of what is urgently required.

The messages of Doha and Tehran are too clear to ignore, as are the warnings that the administration is receiving from its most important Arab allies in the region.

The hole Israel is digging may not only bury the peace process, but the stability and security of the region as well.

Therefore, Netanyahu failed his December test, and Secretary Albright has given him another month to prepare and answer. In mid-January, President Clinton will meet with both Netanyahu and Palestine National Authority President Yasser Arafat. The meetings alone will not produce needed change. It's the pressure that must be brought to bear between now and then that will make change possible. Not only Netanyahu, but the U.S. as well, ought to use this month wisely.

Recolonisation or globalisation of Africa?

By John Gay Yoh

SOME AFRICAN, European and American scholars have been theorising since the late 1980s about the possibility of recolonising the Third World and Africa in particular as a "genuine" outlet and a solution to the civil wars and social upheavals in the region. One renowned African scholar proposed a peacekeeping bloc scenario. In his opinion, Africa has proven incapable to rule itself as tribes are killing themselves in the name of justice, equality and democracy. He suggests that four or five African regional powers (Ethiopia, Sudan, South Africa, Nigeria and Egypt) be given the mandate to keep peace in the four regions of the continent.

The second scenario — which was advocated by Western scholars — suggests that since no particular tribe can pervade other tribes to accept its dominance, the best candidates for better governance and smooth political evolution in Africa would be the Western powers, especially the colonial powers, Britain, France, Italy, Belgium and Spain. The rationale is that Africa under colonial domination was better off economically than it is today. They should be invited to take up their old jobs until such time that tribalism in Africa is completely neutralised. Human rights should be the priority of the "new colonial masters." Education should take the lead in the new colonial set up: development and economic reforms should have the first attention of the recolonial powers. It is the 1940s and the 1950s agenda if you like!

Another scenario is the American initiative — the Al Gore-Warren Christopher peace keeping proposal for Africa. This scenario advocates handing over of African peace keeping and conflict resolution business to the superpowers, particularly the United States since it has the ability and the resources to intervene any time wherever a need arises in any part of Africa.

The last scenario is the globalisation syndrome — political, economic and social domination of Africa from without.

It would be unfair to deny however, that none of these scenarios is in operation in Africa. A regional bloc peace keeping scenario has been put to the test by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Liberia. The IMF-World Bank's "IMI conditionalities" represent on-going economic colonial presence in disguise. The U.S. conflict resolution-peace keeping force programme is under way in the form of military training of a special peace keeping force whose membership is drawn from U.S. allies in the continent. And globalisation is in full gear since the late 1980s. There is no doubt that war is a bad experience for any nation. However recolonisation of Africa — in its traditional perspective — is no solution. I am sure that, even as the world enters the 21st century in two years, no one would deny that the killing in Africa is inhuman and a tragedy.

The American civil war was brutal. The French Communards rose up in Paris as brutally as they were crushed by the Versailles government. The Spanish civil war witnessed unprecedented cruelty on both sides. Even Europe's last great wars — World War I and II — were as brutal as its religious wars — the 30 and the 100 years-wars. In these wars, the recolonisation option proved counterproductive if we consider Germany and Japan as examples. It is also true that wars, whether European, African or Arab, tend to escalate longer because the sides of conflict — understanding and dedicated to the success or defeat of issues involved — do not lose

heart quickly.

Like the cold war, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Sudanese 42-year-old civil war, reasons for escalating the war remain alive and are even strengthened by every event on the battlefield. Although the IMF-World Bank institutional neo-colonisation of Africa is in full progress, one would not expect a full scale 19th century colonialism to recycle — and though a bitter reality — it is too much to swallow. This is the case in any type of war, whether economic, social or political.

But what does the recolonisation of Africa mean in international politics? Is recolonisation equal to "Globalisation"? And what do we mean by globalisation?

Does globalisation have the same meaning as "world society," international community," "interdependence," "centralising tendencies," "world system," "globalism," "universalism," "internationalisation or globality"? If we take all these buzzwords and others, they would suggest that "globalisation" means something that is changing human beings' preoccupation with territoriality or the nation-state. This would of course imply the idea of change and a process rather than a prevailing condition.

Unlike globalism (which Professor Samuel Huntington called the clash of civilisations) — which advocates shared values by all the world's five billion people, their environment and their roles as citizens, customers or producers — globalisation refers to sequences that unfold either in the mind or behaviour, to processes that evolve as people and organisations — such as NGOs — go about their daily tasks and seek to realise their particular goals.

In other words, while localisation emanates from all those pressures which lend individuals, groups and institutions to narrow their visions and withdraw to less encompassing processes, organisations or systems, globalisation is a process expressed in technological, psychological, social, economic or political developments that foster the expansion of interests. To put it differently, globalisation is boundary-broadening and localisation is boundary-heightening. The former allows people, groups, norms, practices and institutions to move about despite boundaries.

The boundary-heightening process of localisation is designed to restrict the movement of people, goods, information, and norms within the realm of state sovereignty. Globalisation is thus worse in content than recolonisation. But it is the globalisation economicism, its economic reductionism, its technological determinism, its political cynicism, its defeatism, its immobilism, its de-socialisation of the human beings and control of risk, which Africans should be worried about.

While recolonisation, whether under disguise of globalisation or under any other name is unwelcome in Africa, one would not deny that Africans have needs that can only be fulfilled by close-at-hand organisations and other needs that are best served by organisations beyond their borders at national or transnational levels. Thus the reality of life requires them, or in fact allows them, to have multiple loyalties and memberships likely to grow as the efficiencies of their states diminish. It is along these lines that globalisation enthusiasts base their arguments.

But how can globalisation be harmonised with the African way of life? Looking at it from an economic perspective, globalisation can well be received as a way of life — a production structure that determines what material goods and services are produced by human societies for their survival

and comfort.

In other words, instead of these goods being produced by and for people living in the territory of a state, they are now increasingly produced by people in several states, for a world market, instead of for a local market.

The danger lies instead of the creation and use of credit taking place within African societies, it now takes place across territorial frontiers, in global markets electronically linked into systems. Thus whatever problem that arises in the world markets in any part of the world, will affect the African local banks and markets. It goes without denying that African financial systems, banks and markets, continue to create credit for local use, but these institutions are no longer autonomous; they are part of the larger system, more vulnerable to its ups and downs than to its desires.

The recent crash of the Asian stock exchange markets, especially in Japan and South Korea, provide us with good examples of global economic interdependence. But globalisation also affects African perceptions, beliefs, ideas and even tastes. While African tribal cultures will persist for more years to come, the sensitivities of individual urban African peoples will be increasingly modified by the process of global homogenisation. The role of the so-called information revolution is visible in this context. Internet and satellite dishes will definitely affect urban Africans' perception of culture and may lead to a state of "cultural confusionism" not only in Africa, but also in other developing countries. This level of globalisation may — indeed in the long run — be the most dangerous of all the changes brought about by globalisation.

In as much as the law of nature states that changes always create losers as well as winners, the truth is that there are costs which are not naturally worth benefits. Talking from an African perspective — a continent without technical know-how and where most natural resources are unexplored — globalisation is taking place at a rapid pace, and thus the risks in incorporating undeveloped societies into the world economy without a central controller, are greater than the opportunities. Talking in terms of practicality, any market economy needs a lender of last resort, an authority able to discipline but also to give confidence to banks and financial markets. Some would say that the current Washington-based agencies are efficient for this assignment, but are these institutions partial in their dealing with Africa? In other words, neither the money suppliers (IMF, World Bank or Paris Club) nor the international organisations (UNDP, ECA or other U.N. agencies) can be relied on for either task. If the world is open to itself to the point of complete integration as it is shaping today, I think these corporate players (the multinational companies which are destroying African economies and environments) will continue to destroy and pollute the whole planet, while weak and poor countries such as African nations are handicapped by principles of international law and sovereignty.

Another important aspect worth mentioning is that, while most African states are trying to be accountable to their people, globalisation is allowing international bureaucracies to undermine accountability in these countries. The economic and political vulnerability which most African states found themselves in, gave globalisation defenders some justifications to interfere in African affairs.

The first justification which is often cited is that the foreign invasion argument is no

longer necessary as long as neighbours show no sign of wanting to invade for the sake of command over territory. Unless the need arises in relation to control over oil or gas (Nigeria vs Cameroon), water supplies (Egypt vs Sudan and Ethiopia) and where governments feel a moral or emotional compulsion to incorporate territory inhibited by ethnic or religious groups into the state to safeguard their interests and security (Ethiopia vs Somalia).

Another justification is that weak African states are no longer able to resist the foreign exchange markets. Thus only a powerful coalition of major central banks can stop a collapsing currency (i.e., Uganda, Zaïre (DRC), Sudan, Liberia etc.). There is no doubt that globalisation has opened tax-evading doors for multinational and many individuals, especially in Eastern Southern and Western African countries. As more tax-havens open up and more use is made of them, weak African states' revenues suffer; thus more than 40 African states, in desperate moves, raise money by selling off state-owned enterprises, or implement the IMF's favourite reform mechanism, "privatisation of the public sector." In most African countries today, the public sector, which was once an important lever of state power over the economy, cannot survive the pressures of global competition. In globalisation language, protectionism is wrong while liberalisation is right!

In the U.S., the giant behind the globalisation process since late 1980s, not all the political and economic sectors of the society are for globalisation as described above. The American globalisation enthusiasts are divided between self-styled competitiveness advocates and free-market conservatives. The former speak of globalisation as an integral part of a broader "proactive" government strategy to restore America's relative economic position in the world stage. Although this group insists that trade is not a zero-sum-game, it emphasises the importance of American exporters getting their appropriate share of foreign markets and beating the competition in the race for business opportunities whenever possible. The free market conservatives see any trade expansion as good in itself that enhances global efficiency or maximises global welfare, thus benefiting America indirectly. They oppose as unproductive, government efforts to shape worldwide economic flows for national advantage. In fact it seems that one dilemma which American economists face these days is how to identify which firms (many of which are owned by congressmen) operating in Africa or elsewhere, are truly serving the American people's interests and therefore where and how to target globalisation policy initiatives and how to control them overseas?

As we have seen above, recolonisation of Africa is no longer a question of whether it is possible to recolonise Africa, but rather whether it has actually begun without the knowledge of African leaders! For sure globalisation is not an African problem per se, but a universal, unavoidable, problem which requires close attention and genuine interest in defining it and studying its advantages and disadvantages. The cynical irony is that "globaloney" tries to persuade people to believe that nothing has changed and that everything is fine! This is not true. A lot of change has taken place in the world and perhaps to the worse.

The writer is an associate researcher at the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies in Amman. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Features

Electric cars gear up for Kathmandu's clean-up drive

Some transport experts believe that electric vehicles will compete directly with oil-powered models within a decade as advances in design and production take effect. Several governments now promote their use, and hopes are high in Nepal that they can help to freshen the polluted capital.

By Jan Sharma

KATHMANDU — Nepal is stepping up the promotion of electric vehicles as part of efforts to reduce air pollution in the Kathmandu Valley and present a cleaner face to attract tourists.

At present, thousands of fume-belching motors choke the capital's streets — adding a dirty haze to an environment already suffering from rapid urban sprawl and related garbage and sewage disposal problems.

But electric-transport developments in the Himalayan kingdom could soon help to lift the cloud.

Two domestic firms now produce battery-powered "tempo" — popular three-wheeled minibuses that carry up to 10 people — and their use is being promoted with the help of a grant from Denmark.

The Nepalese government, which has declared 1998 Visit Nepal Year in an effort to boost tourism, is keen to see safe (or clean) tempos replace the 4,000 dirty diesel- and petrol-driven ones in the valley. Doubts remain, however, over the strength of political will to impose bans on polluting vehicles and to enforce curbs on exhaust emissions.

Two years ago, the United States-based Global Resources Institute helped to design the safe tempo (top speed: 50 kilometres an hour). Local entrepreneurs then formed companies — the Nepal Electric Vehicle Industry (NEVI) and the Electric Vehicle Company (EVC) — which between them have built about 50 three-wheelers.

"My dream is to transform Kathmandu into the world's first capital where electric-driven vehicles dominate the mass-transport system," said Kiran Raj Joshi, an electrical engineer and chairman of NEVI, which is planning to make another 120 safe tempos in 1998.

"We are committed to developing electric-powered two-, three- and even four-wheeled vehicles. This will help conserve the environment and cut oil import bills. They make perfect sense for a country as rich in hydroelectric potential as ours."

Motors and batteries have to be imported, and safe tempos sell for Rs500,000, each (\$1=57 rupees) — compared with Rs200,000 to Rs300,000 for oil-powered — but their running costs are low: About Rs120 in electricity to charge batteries for a day's travel, as opposed to Rs320 in fuel for a diesel tempo.

"The technology we use is very simple," explained Bijaya Man Serchan, NEVI's managing director. "Our safe tempos are popular among com-

muters."

Despite a standard fare of Rs8, compared with Rs5 for diesel tempos, passengers seem pleased. "It's so clean and tidy that given the choice I always prefer the safe tempos," said Purna Khatriwada, a Kathmandu housewife.

However, Jyoti Karna, a teacher, pointed out: "There are not enough of them around."

One driver, Netra Bahadur Lama, said: "It's so smooth and comfortable to drive. There are no gears, and I've not had an accident, nor have I heard of any of my colleagues having accidents. The only problem is that sometimes even fully charged batteries run down and I have to interrupt the service and return to the garage to change the battery pack."

Batteries take several hours to recharge and usually last a driver half a day.

The idea now is to establish battery-exchange centres across the capital with the help of a Rs25 million grant from Copenhagen. This money, recently approved, is part of Rs300 million pledged by the Danes if the programme proceeds successfully.

Kathmandu officials want to use some of the funds to offer cheap loans to tempo owners to convert their vehicles to battery power. The conversion costs Rs200,000, and the operators say the government should offer considerably more financial help to switch.

"Are you foolish enough to believe the tempo owners will convert to electric ones?" said one driver, Ashok Kumar.

Electric-vehicle makers and diesel-tempo operators are unhappy that they have not been invited to sit on the official committee currently considering ways of using the Danish grant.

The authorities have been accused of inconsistency and of lacking a coherent strategy to tackle air pollution. Enforcement of emission standards, is said to be poor. Fewer than half the 95,500 vehicles in the Kathmandu Valley have been tested since exhaust limits were set in 1994. And the regulations do not apply to the tens of thousands of dirty, noisy, two-stroke motorcycles.

Vehicles that fail the tests are banned from entering two areas in Kathmandu. But plans to extend the ban to two more areas, including Naya Sadak, the business and shopping centre, were postponed earlier this year due to political and commercial pressures. There is no fixed timetable to widen the exclusion zones and the government's will is under question.

Officials must soon decide how to apply the Danish grant, and are also being asked to consider promoting the use of electric vehicles by reducing the cost of electricity for recharging batteries. In addition, operators are seeking cuts in import duties on batteries and accessories, and efforts by the government to promote the domestic production of batteries

Gemini News

WHERE TO GO THIS WEEKEND

Twist, turn and learn through Salt, dams and crossings

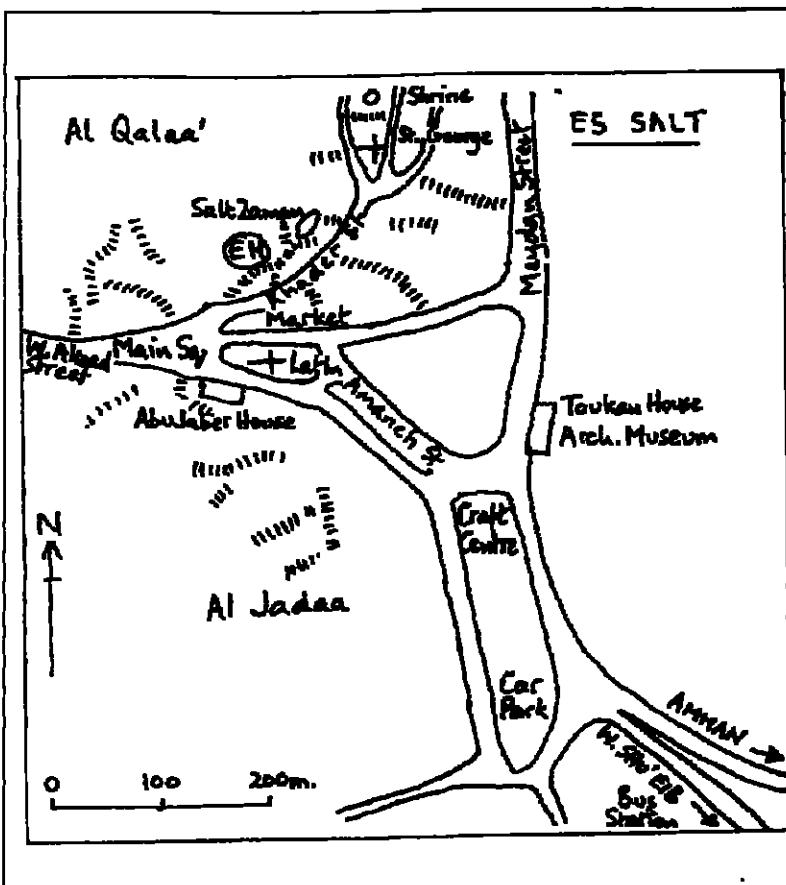
This feature is the first in a short series to provide information about the less frequented parts of the country. Geography teacher Richard Tanner guides the reader through the points of interest.

HEAD WEST through Sweileh for Salt. Most of its 5000 years of history lie buried below the living remains of Salt's glorious late Ottoman past. Park near the Craft Centre to visit young Saltis learning different handicrafts and buy their wares. Pass by the late Nineteenth Century facades with their intricate carving, towards the Latin Church (1866) and the Abu Jaber House (1894) with its frescoed ceilings where Emir Abdullah stayed in 1922 before establishing his capital in Amman. Across the main square are steps leading past the derelict English Hospital, opened by Christian Missionary Society in the late 19th century as Jordan's first modern hospital, to Salt Zaman, formerly the Qaish home (1868) now sadly closed, and onto Khader Street and St. George's. Here you can visit a little shrine and admire more beautifully carved house fronts. Take the steps down to Meydan Street and right for the former Toukan house, lovingly restored as a museum where you can admire interior stonework and the findings of local archaeology.

Turn back on yourself to drop past the bus station into Wadi Salt. Beside the Water Treatment Plant (LHS) is Khirbet es Salt, newly excavated (RHS). The wadi is joined by tributaries to form Wadi Shu'eib, a spectacular valley, lined by panoramic viewpoints where you can hear the river rustling the reeds and bamboo. Flowers adorn the hillsides in spring, even down to sea-level, where you rejoin the river, before it trickles into the silted Shuna reservoir. Here is a small play area and possible viewpoint for wading birds feeding in the mud.

Continue straight ahead at the checkpoint for South Shuna, past the soldier commemorating the successful defence of Karamah (1973), to find Tell Nimrin on the left. The road has sliced through layers dated as Bronze (1300 BC) and Iron (850 BC) Age, Roman, Byzantine and Umayyad periods. Recent excavations have revealed mud-brick walls burnt by fire dated to 700 BC when the Assyrians attacked this area and destroyed Jerusalem. Tells like Nimrin are made from layer upon layers of collapsed mud brick. Located near to wadis, these sites were used over and over again from earliest times. They represent the first settled homes from a time when, as the waters of the Jordan Valley dried (10,000 years ago), people first cultivated plants and tamed animals, producing food surpluses for permanent living. You'll find many such tells along the warm and sheltered Jordan Valley. (Reference: Rami Khouri "Antiquities of the Jordan Valley," Al Kutba, 1988.)

Turn left at S. Shuna and cross the Perea, the plains of Moab where Joshua assembled the



Map of points of interest in Salt

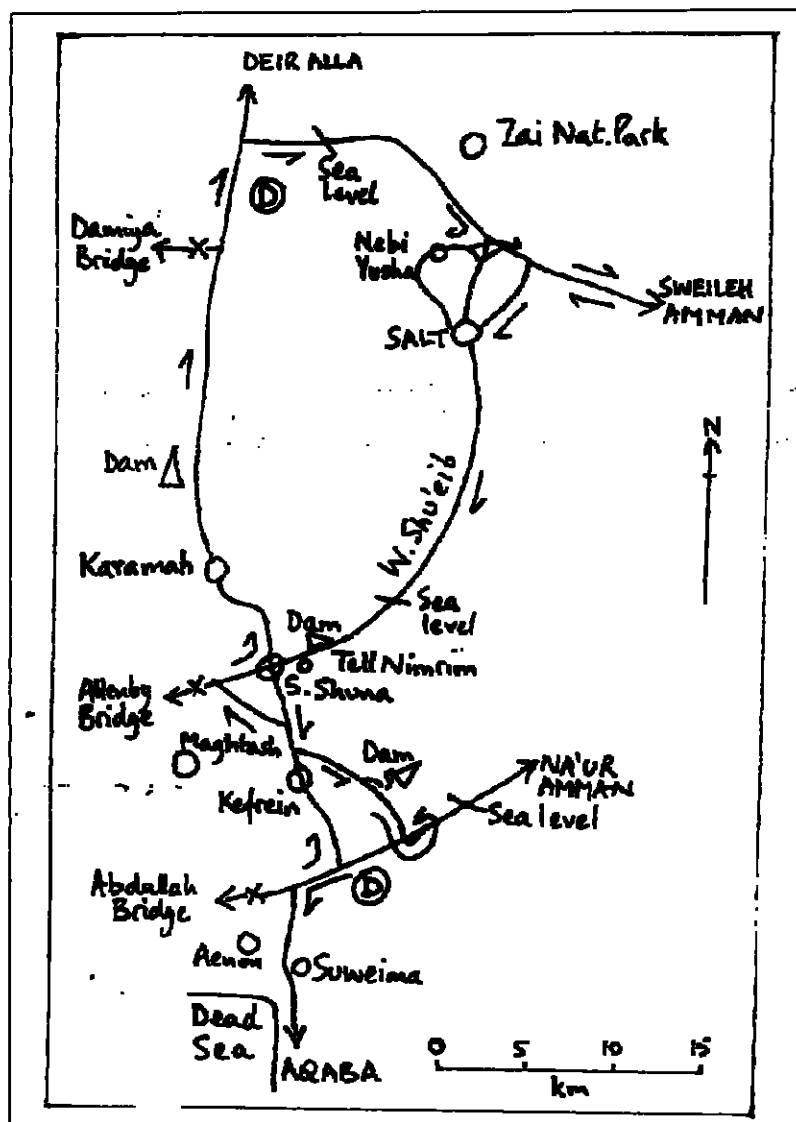
Israelites before crossing into Canaan (Joshua 3). Left again signed Amman, brings you to a ruinous stone building (LHS) with a road leading onto the raised Kefrein Dam. This stores 8 MCM of winter rain for irrigating the lower Jordan Valley in summer, much to the satisfaction of the egrets, herons and other water birds found here, and others in the trees below the dam. After enjoying some reflections, return to the main road and turn left and towards Amman, at the junction checkpoint, do a U-turn towards the Dead Sea. Spot the dolmens, raised stone slabs over Early Bronze tombs, on the left, as you travel down towards the closed Abdullah Bridge. Take the compulsory left (checkpoint) towards Suweima and the Dead Sea. On your right is Wadi el Kharrar, the springs around Aenon, one of the baptismal sites (John 3, 23). Certainly there are remains from Byzantine times on Jebel mar Elias, where Elijah ascended into heaven (II Kings, 2, 4-15). Unless you need a dip in the Dead Sea or a visit to the Rest House, retrace your steps from this lowest place on earth (-400m) towards Kefrein village, and take the left fork alongside Abdullah Canal. Built with British aid to carry freshwater from the Yarmouk River on our northern border, this concrete channel is the lifeline for farmers of the East Ghor. You're heading for the sole open bridge, a single span of rusty iron which crosses the Jordan River towards Jericho. On your left is Maghrash, the ford where Joshua crossed into Canaan and where Elijah and Elisha crossed to our side. Located on the Madaba mosaic map, and with ancient St. John's monastery on the other side, this is the alternative site for Christ's baptism by John (Matthew 3, 13), but you'll have to be escorted through mine-

30m hole stores winter floodwater for transfer south from February to April, before temperatures rise to 40° or 50°C. This extension of irrigable land should add even more to Jordan's food production. The intensive farming you see around you isn't new to the East Ghor; in Ayyubid — Mamluk times (1200-1500 AD), canals took water to great fields of sugar cane, as the remains of sugar mills testify.

Just past the Damiya Bridge turnoff (LHS) on the site of another ancient ford and Roman bridge over the Jordan River towards Nablus, the rocky borders of the Valley close in from the right. Up on the rocks is the Damiya dolmen field, dozens of Early Bronze Age stone tables over re-usable burial chambers. Visit these before they're all smashed by grave-robbing, and find too later burial caves carved from the solid rock.

Continue a few km. north for the right turn back to Salt and Amman. Climb up out of the rift valley, past sea-level and into the cooler freshness of the pines and Zai National Park (LHS). Enjoy a last sunset view over the Perea from the site of Nabi Yusha (Hosea) off to the right before Salt before returning on the main road above Beqa'a camp (LHS) through Sweileh for Amman.

The writer, an ex-principal of a British school, is now teaching at Amman Baccalaureate School. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.



Map of road leading to the southern Jordan Valley

Rotarians crusade for a polio-free world

By Karin Davies
Associated Press

ADDIS ABABA — Rotary international wanted to give a present to the world for its 100th birthday in 2005: freedom from the threat of polio.

"It was such a naive dream," said Clifford Dochtermann of Moraga, California, chairman of the Rotary Foundation, which provides humanitarian aid. "We had no depth of understanding of the complexity of the task."

But the dream is coming true.

Rotary, a Chicago-based service club for business and professional people, set a goal in 1985 of raising \$120 million for polio eradication. Within two years, members raised \$247 million.

That's when the World Health Organisation started to take Rotarians seriously, Dochtermann said. Initially, public health officials had doubted the group's commitment and ability to do the job, the retired university administrator recalled.

In 1988, the 166-nation World Health Assembly endorsed Rotary's dream

of wiping out polio, and set a deadline of 2000.

The Rotary Foundation expects to spend \$400 million on the campaign, the largest single contribution ever from the private sector for a public health programme.

But Dochtermann said at least as important is the ability of Rotary to call on 1.2 million members in 155 countries to mobilise. Volunteers help carry out mass immunisations.

Rotarians came from 25 countries to help with Ethiopia's first immunization campaign, organised in November with WHO and U.N. Children's Fund to vaccinate 8.5 million children.

Among the Rotarians was Karen Kline of Willette Harbor, Illinois, who joined Rotary's polio-plus campaign a decade ago for a very personal reason — her sister, Ruth, died of polio at the age of four-and-a-half in 1955.

"So many Rotarians are old enough to remember how horrible this disease was," Kline said, recalling the loss of loved ones and the fear that led to bans on swimming pools and movie theaters during

"polio season."

Because Rotarians are free of government ties, they have played key roles in cross-border immunisation efforts, such as Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador, Peru in South America. They delivered vaccine in combat zones during Central American conflicts. In El Salvador and Nicaragua.

In Bulgaria and Romania, Rotary volunteers persuaded minority ethnic groups to participate in national immunisation days despite their distrust of government programmes.

Rotary also has urged governments and donor agencies to increase their commitment to polio eradication. This year, the U.S. government agreed to spend \$72 million on the campaign.

Today, Rotarians are increasingly involved in setting up effective surveillance systems so health officials can be sure polio has been eradicated.

"We have come such a long way. We cannot let this opportunity escape the world," Dochtermann said

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IMF says Asia crisis to slow global economic growth

WASHINGTON (R) — Asia's raging financial crisis threatens to put a damper on global growth but there is no reason to be overly pessimistic about the world economy's prospects, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said.

In its interim World Economic Outlook, compiled after the fund had to revise its original 1998 estimates amid Asia's financial woes, the IMF forecast sharp falls in Asian growth.

But the fund said overall world output would still grow by a buoyant 3.5 per cent next year, up from 2.8 per cent in 1997, and 0.8 percentage points below its previous forecast in October and 0.6 points below this year's estimated rate of expansion.

"The threat to global growth from the present crisis is reasonably limited," the report said.

While noting that growth in North America and Europe looked "well sustained in the period ahead," the IMF warned: "A sharp slowdown in economic growth is an unavoidable consequence of the type of crisis affecting a number of the Asian economies."

Three former "Asian Tigers" — Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea — had to appeal to the international community for help over recent months as a financial tornado ripped through the region. The IMF has put together international bailout packages for those countries totalling more than \$100 billion.

Admitting that it originally had misjudged the extent of the turmoil, the fund appealed to troubled Asian nations to urgently reform their fiscal systems, keep

monetary policy tight and overhaul weak financial sectors.

Still, it warned the risk of the Asian trouble spreading to other countries had grown and that there was no way of knowing whether the world had yet seen the worst.

"The balance of risks is a little on the downside," IMF chief economist Michael Mussa said at a news conference to present the report. "We should be worried but not concerned about the world economic outlook."

The lending agency warned that a further slowdown in the already sluggish Japanese economy posed the "key risk" to advanced economies elsewhere in the world.

In the most gloomy section of its report, the IMF predicted the Japanese economy would grow by only 1.1 per cent in 1998 compared with 1.0 per cent this year.

It said Japan's recovery had "essentially stalled" this year and it was "now expected to experience markedly slower growth in both 1997 and 1998 than in 1996."

The IMF forecast Thailand's economy to stagnate next year — the fund had predicted as much as seven per cent growth in Thailand in a report issued in May — after growing by 0.6 per cent this year. Growth in South Korea was expected to fall to 2.5 per cent next year from 6.0 this year, the IMF said.

The fund was decidedly more upbeat about the outlook for the major industrial powers in North America and western Europe. It said growth in those regions was likely to continue on an

upward path, particularly in the United States which is in the seventh year of an uninterrupted economic expansion.

"It's fortunate not to have all countries of the world facing a simultaneous slowdown," chief economist Mussa said.

Growth in the United States was forecast to slow down to 2.4 per cent in 1998 from a red-hot 3.8 per cent this year, a downward revision of 0.2 per cent from the previous report.

European Union output growth was seen at 2.7 per cent next year, up from 2.6 per cent in 1997 and 0.1 point below earlier estimates.

Noting that the inflation performance in both North America and Europe was "satisfactory," the fund suggested that major G-7 economies should strive to hold interest rates unchanged, thus avoiding further turmoil in world financial markets.

However, should strong growth in the United States, Britain and Canada "not slow to a sustainable pace," rates would need to be raised to fend off inflation, the fund said.

At the same time, it noted that rates might actually have to be lowered if the Asian crisis should turn out to be worse than forecast.

The turmoil in Asia is widely expected to dampen growth as well as inflation prospects in major industrialised economies by reducing their exports to the region and keeping a lid on the prices of goods they import from Asia.

WTO warns regional pacts pose risks to multilateral trading system

GENEVA (AFP) — Regional trade pacts pose a risk to the multilateral trading system, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has warned in its annual report.

Virtually every WTO member belongs to at least one regional economic grouping, such as the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) or South America's MERCOSUR.

Although such initiatives create more open trade regimes and economic policies in general, "they do pose certain challenges for the trading system at large," the WTO said in its 1997 annual report.

The WTO's chief worry is that regional pacts could divert resources away from efforts to free up trade on a multilateral basis.

Slashing multi-border trade barriers in a non-discriminatory fashion has been the overriding mission of the three-year-old WTO, and of its predecessor, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), set up after the World War II to help boost world economic

growth.

Ensuring adequate attention is paid to the multilateral process and that regional commitments are complementary to the system is one of the biggest challenges for the future, the WTO said.

Another is hammering out a format for the work programme, or "built-in" agenda, adopted at Marrakech at the end of the Uruguay Round of trade talks in 1993.

The programme, straddling the turn of the century, covers new sets of trade negotiations in a wide range of areas, including agriculture, maritime services, and clothing and textiles.

One issue of debate is whether the WTO should combine these various negotiations into another global trade round.

Preventing the marginalisation of the world's poorest countries is listed as another challenge.

To start the ball rolling, the WTO in October organised a meeting at which richer WTO members

agreed to some better market access deals for the least developed lot.

Sponsors also included the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The report also trumpets the WTO's achievements during the year.

One major result was an agreement by 40 countries to eliminate tariffs on trade in information technology products by 2000.

A separate pact was signed by 69 governments to inject competition in global telecommunications markets, worth around \$600 billion a year.

The WTO has just added a third feather to its cap with a deal liberalising financial services markets, including banking and insurance sectors in crisis-hit Asian economies.

The special theme of the report this year is trade and competition policy, with a chapter focusing specifically on business practices and how they restrict or distort trade.

Egyptian parliament endorses income tax cuts

CAIRO (R) — Egypt's parliament has enacted legislation that reduces the maximum income tax rate to 40 per cent from 48 per cent, state television said.

The law also increases tax-free income allowances to a maximum of 3,000 pounds (\$884) from 1,680 pounds. The new tax rates range from 20 per cent on the first 2,000 pounds to 40 per cent on more than 16,000 pounds, the television said.

Finance Minister Mohamed El Gharib told parliament the changes were in line with "government policy to ease burdens

on citizens, particularly low-income people...and encourage investment."

He said last week that the cuts would cost the treasury about 245 million pounds a year, but forecast that the gross tax receipts would not fall because of rising incomes.

Egypt's gross domestic product is expected to grow by at least 5.2 per cent in fiscal 1997/98 (July-June) from 5.1 per cent in 1996/97.

Egypt last changed its income tax structure in 1994.

Recession looms for Indonesian economy

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia's economic woes are likely to intensify as a recession and ballooning foreign debt are likely in the wake of its currency losing more than half its value against the dollar in less than six months, economists said.

UBS Global Research said in its latest report that the sharp rupiah depreciation was leading to growing debt service payments and would push even more corporates into bankruptcy.

"A recession now looks unavoidable — the magnitude of which will crucially

depend on near-term developments," UBS economist Christa Marti said in the report.

Portfolio investors, who were buying Indonesian assets at premiums in the first half of the year, have been dumping the same assets at discounts.

Stephanus Partono, an analyst with Goldman Sachs in Singapore, said Indonesian assets listed on the stock exchange were being traded at their lowest-ever level of 1.7 times book value, with some already at book-value. Economists said the rupiah

had overshot but noted that investors were unconvinced, hampering a smooth recovery of the battered currency and worsening the economic outlook for next year.

Ms. Marti from UBS said a 10 per cent rupiah depreciation increased total debt servicing costs by an equivalent of some \$1.5 billion.

"Given the \$65 billion public sector debt (including \$5 billion-\$10 billion from an IMF package), the impact on the government budget is gigantic," she said, adding that the foreign debt servicing costs could increase to 40

per cent of total government expenditure from some 23 per cent currently.

Ms. Marti said she had revised real gross domestic product forecast for 1998 to a contraction of 2.0 per cent from 1.5 per cent growth and to 1.1 per cent in 1999 from 4.0 per cent.

But Pande Raja Silalahi, an economist with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), said the country could still escape the recession threat if the government could prevent the public panicking because of the rupiah slump.

HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL JORDAN VISITS MOTHER TERESA'S HOME FOR THE HOMELESS



AS PART OF the charitable activities organised by Hotel InterContinental Jordan, a group of the management and staff of the hotel visited Mother Theresa's home for the homeless. Mr. Jonathan Soper, General Manager & Regional Director Operations Jordan and his team were warmly welcomed by the management and the residents of the home. Everybody enjoyed a lunch prepared by the hotel's chef, during which the hotel's dance group "YA Hala" gave a short debek performance.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

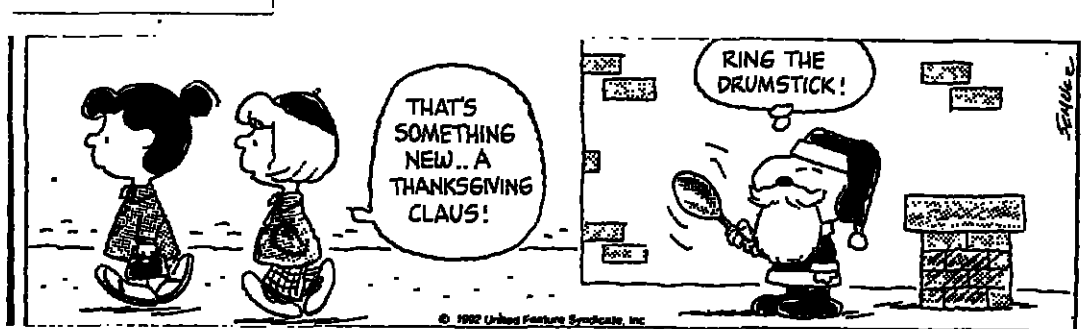
ACROSS

- Landlocked
- African nation
- Symbol of achievement
- Pet protection
- Wrinkly
- Watercraft
- Hearty eats
- Shaw's favorite vegetable?
- Vendi opera
- Opposite of SSW
- Ponce de
- Let the bet ride
- First name in talk shows
- Betty Ford Clinic, e.g.
- Sign of victory
- Ignores orders
- Pict of land
- Land
- Fish eggs
- Becomes rancid
- Roman greeting
- Karma
- Advanced deg.
- Halm and Pavin
- Tongue-clipping sounds
- Forage plants
- Letters on many cars
- Cubs legend
- Ernie
- Swindled
- Sneaky person
- Comic Johnson
- Serving of corn
- One-celled plant
- Lennon's favorite liquor?
- Glass container
- Immediate occasion
- Singer/actor Kristofferson
- Right on maps
- Be very reluctant
- Millennia

DOWN

- Sampas rival
- Marilyn or Lana
- Make fit
- "Agnes"
- One who consents
- Winged elm
- Unknown: Abbr.
- Asian nat.
- Most profound
- Type of beetle
- Collins's favorite nuts?
- Musical appendix
- On vacation
- French pronoun
- Sailors' shouts
- Declare
- Pat of the NBA
- Kingman
- Wife of the Rosea winner
- Wet expanses
- Venomous vipers
- Small salmon
- Valley's favorite vegetables?
- Works for
- Act subdivision
- Provo's state
- California city
- Browned in butter
- Dark, dense, igneous rock
- Surfing shots
- Writer Jong
- Guidance rocket
- Like some litchers
- 55 Attire
- Employ a hand signal
- Lamb's pen name
- Beheaded Boleyn
- Neither's partner
- Script

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're a little concerned about money. Don't worry too much. It'll be there when you need it. Be careful about your spending and you'll be fine. Sometimes you end up wasting more than you save. That might happen today. Let someone else do the last-minute shopping.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Decisions made now are going to last forever, so be careful. There could be a hassle with a partner, or an old enemy. There are conflicting opinions on everything, but that's OK. You have to speak loud to be heard, however. In fact, you might have to shout.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You could get rich if you do all the work you're facing. On the other hand, maybe the work you're doing is housework. In that case, you don't need ever to see the money. You're doing it out of love. Right? Make sure they appreciate you, too.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Everything seems more peaceful. That's good, because you have a tendency to get moody. You might as well relax a little bit. There are still a lot of stressful things going on out there, but you don't have to get involved. Stay out of the rain.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) People in your life enjoy the stability you provide. You don't want to make big changes this time of year. There's something empowering about doing things the old way. It strengthens everyone in the family to preserve the traditions. So keep it up.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Things won't be exactly as planned. People you're depending on won't show up, or they'll come early. There are decisions to be made and some of them could involve quite a bit of money. That's OK. You have all the skills you need to handle it. Trust yourself.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You and your family need to renew old ties. If you feel constrained by traditions, you obviously don't understand them. Get an older person to explain the meaning behind the stories you have this time of year. They all have valuable lessons to teach. Might as well learn.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Ask to hear the stories again. That oral tradition is a gift that the older people in the family give to the younger ones. Which side of that equation you fit into doesn't really matter. Either way, it's a very enriching experience. See if you can make that happen tonight.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) People are talking, and you'd like to know what they're saying. Nobody will tell you anything. That's because as soon as you find out, everybody else knows, too. It's not that they don't like you. It's just that they'd like there to be a few surprises. Relax.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Spend the day playing with friends and family. There's a hassle during the middle of the day. You're so used to scrimping and saving, it's hard to part with the money now that the time is here. Don't worry. There's more coming in. Besides, what goes around comes around.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) An older person wants to control your every thought and deed. It may have been more appropriate when you were younger, but you didn't like it then, either. Some of that advice may be useful. The thing you like the least may be the most important. Surprise everybody by listening.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Pisces is the sign of miracles. Did you know that? You have the advantage when it comes to conversations with God. You can act as translator for those who find it more difficult to make that communication. Today, the signal should be coming in loud and clear.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



"If we get a faster computer, can we download dinner from the Internet?"

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles. One letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KYDUS

TACCH

ENTAUB

TUCLED

WHAT THE BOSS DID WHEN BUSINESS GOT SLOW.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: _____

(Answers Monday)

Yesterday's Jumbles: WRATH PIETY NINETY DUGOUT
Answer: You are usually required to pay this in college — ATTENTION

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

It is premature to talk about lower customs tariffs — finance minister

**** FINANCE MINISTER** Suleiman Hafez said Tuesday that the news published in the local newspapers about the government's intention to reduce customs tariffs on imports from 40 per cent to 30 per cent were not accurate. Noting that customs tariffs were reviewed during the past years in terms of ceilings and classifications and that a 40 per cent ceiling was set, the finance minister said it is premature to talk about lowering the ceiling.

"Such a change is under study and is being analysed in light of many considerations, the foremost of which are the ceiling of protection for local industries, customs tariffs on production inputs and the average customs tariffs within international standards.

Industry, Trade and Supply Minister Hani Mulki stressed that the protection

of national production tops the priorities of the government as it seeks to expand the climate of fair competition. "When liberalising trade, we will not permit exposing local production to dumping practices," Dr. Mulki emphasised. The ministry, he said, will be quick to counter any dumping for any product even if that leads to banning the import of that product.

Dr. Mulki concluded by noting that the government, in its drive to support the industrial sector, has recently exempted more raw material inputs from customs tariffs and has reduced customs on other inputs. As such, the number of production inputs totally exempted from customs has reached 495 products and those which enjoy certain reductions total 46 products (Al Ra'i).

Sovereign bonds for \$100 million to be launched in first quarter of '98

**** THE KINGDOM** will launch \$100 million worth of sovereign bonds in the first quarter of next year, bankers have said. According to Walid Irshaid, the representative of Societe Generale which is managing the issue, the decision to postpone the launch was very wise as it would have carried negative results from the turbulence in world stock markets.

The government will use the proceeds from the sale of bonds to repay part of Jordanian debt to the U.S. Jordan is expected to achieve a 30 per cent return which is a good return in international standards (Al Ra'i).

Jordan Cement plans first corporate bond issue

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuters

AMMAN — The Jordan Cement Factories Company plans to launch by next January the country's first non-government guaranteed corporate bond listed in the Amman stock market, bankers said Tuesday.

Jordan Cement Factories appointed Jordan's Export and Finance Bank, the country's specialist export-finance bank which seeks an expanded investment role, to act as the sole lead manager of the five-year fixed-rate JD10 million (\$14 million) note whose maturity is due 2002.

The offering is to be sold at par with the yield interest rate of between 9.25 per cent to 9.50 per cent depending on market appetite at the time of launch, the lead manager said.

"The issue will be unsecured notes. It is the first non-government guaranteed corporate bond of its kind in Jordan. The notes will be in registered form," Ali Al Husry, chairman of Jordan's Export and Finance Bank, told Reuters in an interview.

Mr. Husry said he was hopeful the issue would generate wide investor interest from banks, insur-

ance firms, provident funds and the retail sector and result in active secondary market trading.

The bond issue is to be listed in the Amman Financial Market (AFM) under new issuing rules on securities drafted by the capital markets watchdog Jordan Securities Exchange Commission (JSEC), set up last September as part of a radical market overhaul.

Export and Finance Bank's issue follows steps by Jordan to develop a domestic capital market and create a secondary market by offering new instruments as part of ongoing International Monetary Fund (IMF)-directed structural reforms to consolidate the financial sector.

"It's better for banks to develop instruments available to its borrowers and offer bonds and commercial paper and different schemes... it is a step in the right direction," said Abdul Elah Khatib, general manager of Jordan Cement Factories.

Both the bond's proceeds along another JD20 million loan from Arab Bank which Jordan Cement Factories concluded on Sunday will be utilised to refinance its short-term credit as part of an overall debt restructuring

scheme by the country's sole cement firm, bankers say.

"Jordan Cement intends to use the proceeds of the issue to restructure the company's short-term liabilities and free working capital for ongoing projects. The issue will not raise the net overall indebtedness of the company," Mr. Husry said.

So far the Central Bank's efforts to prod banks to activate a dormant secondary market for certificates of deposit (CDs) and five-year maturity development bonds has not gone very far.

However, Export and Finance Bank hopes the new issue will act as a catalyst to stimulate trading in future government and commercial bonds listed in the bourse by bringing more new instruments and injecting extra liquidity.

Economists say the landmark bond should also help in creating benchmark yields for future corporate issues as more blue-chip firms seek more sophisticated means of finance.

"It will pave the way for other corporates to finance their capital expansion this way as an alternative to plain bank borrowing," one banker said.

Only a handful of corporate and government bond

issues have been listed on the bourse since its inception in 1978 with almost non-existent secondary trading and all bonds being government-guaranteed.

New year's party



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REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7745	0.5997	1.4340	129.80	1.4360	1740.10	1.9394	5.9370
DE Mark	0.5635	1.0000	0.3377	0.8088	73.14	0.3088	980.06	1.1267	3.3454
GB Sterling	1.6674	2.9581	1.0000	2.3895	216.08	2.3944	2901.44	3.3338	9.8994
CH Franc	0.6974	123.68	0.4179	1.0000	90.49	1.0010	1212.78	1.3866	4.1379
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3655	0.4614	1.1037	1.0000	1.1052	13.39	153.86	4.5887
CA Dollar	0.6984	1.2352	0.4178	0.9987	1.11	1.0000	1211.60	1.3919	4.1348
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0189	0.3443	0.0823	1341.92	0.8245	1.0000	11.48	3.4089
NL Guilder	0.5002	88.71	0.2997	0.7171	64.90	0.7179	889.88	1.0000	2.9679
FR Franc	0.1684	0.2987	0.1008	0.2414	21.85	0.2418	33.66	33.6600	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	YER	EGP	SDG
US Dollar	1.0000	2.7090	3.7500	0.0000	0.0000	0.3048	3.6728	1622.50	3.3970
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.4298	5.1803	2147.39	4.7912
Saudi Riyal	0.2667	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0813	0.98	406.00	0.9059
Bahrain Dinar	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Qatar Dinar	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Kuwait Dinar	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0210	0.0000	0.0000	0.0630	0.0000	1.4153	0.9249
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4657	2.4631	0.0000	0.0000	0.2002	2.4123	0.0000	2.2312
Egyptian	0.2944	0.2987	1.1039	0.0000	0.0000	0.0897	1.0812	448.19	0.0000

Energy				
Oil	Crude	Gas	Coal	Electricity
Brent	17.33	17.27		
WTI	18.39	18.26		
Bonny	17.33	17.27		
Dubai	18.85	18.78		
UL Gas	171.00	173.00		

Metal Prices				
Metal	Spot	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
Gold (oz's)	292.2	293.3		
Silver (oz's)	8.18	8.2		
Platinum (oz's)	356.75	357.75		
AL (3 Months)	1531	1532		
CU (3 Months)	1765	1766		
Zinc (3 Months)	1116	1117		
Lead (3 Months)	641	642		
Ni (3 Months)	6960	6965		

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)				
Period	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
USD	5.81	5.78	5.59	5.84
GBP	7.34	7.50	7.50	7.50
JPY	0.16	0.25	0.21	0.28
DEM	3.37	3.58	3.63	3.62
FRF	3.47	3.59	3.68	3.72
CHF	1.30	1.45	1.55	1.60
ITL	5.87	5.70	5.46	5.14

Energy				
Commodity	Unit	Price	Unit	Price
Coffee (c/lbs)	Spot	161.75	Spot	161.75
Cocoa (\$/ton)	Spot	1648	Spot	1648
Sugar (\$/ton)	Spot	301.5	Spot	301.5
Wheat (\$/ton)	Spot	105	Spot	105
Soya (c/lbs)	Spot	24.79	Spot	24.79
Tea (kg)	Spot	165	Spot	165
Barley (\$/bsh)	Spot	0	Spot	0
Rice (\$/ton)	Spot	370	Spot	370

Australia looks to increase Mediterranean trade

SYDNEY (AFP) — The Australian government signalled its intention to develop stronger trade links with the European Union's (EU's) Mediterranean partners in a new trade report unveiled this week.

Deputy Prime Minister and Trade Minister Tim Fischer told an Australian-Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry forum that significant opportunities were open to Australia in the region.

The report, "The EU-Mediterranean Partnership - Opportunities and Challenges for Australia," details the impact of a new trade bloc between the EU and 10 Mediterranean partners.

Mr. Fischer said the government was committed to extending its involvement in key markets outside the Asia-Pacific.

Australia has a trade surplus of 780 million dollars (\$515 million) with Mediterranean countries. In 1996 its exports to the region were worth 1.2 billion dollars (\$80 million) against imports of 420 million dollars (\$277 million).

The study highlighted the important contribution of Australian commodities such as wheat, coal, livestock, sugar, alumina, and wool to the region.

A spokesman for Mr. Fischer said over the past six years Australian exports to Mediterranean countries had doubled compared with its global commodity exports. "I think it's definitely a region where Australia has only begun to scratch the surface," he said.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET									
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 23/12/1997									
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P/E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	NO. OF TRADING	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE
346.000	249.000	ARAB BANK	15.0	1.23	9	300	97715	325.25	325.50
2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8.0	0.00	15	101950	183510	1.80	1.80
3.600	1.800	BANK OF JORDAN	5.7	0.00	3	7500	13500	1.90	1.80
2.680	1.730	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.4	6.00	11	23800	42182	2.74	2.74
4.100	1.850	JOR. SECURITIES	15.0	0.00	3	1500	2335	2.00	2.00
980	630	JOR. GULF BANK	3.9	10.61	37	90107	57933	6.3	6.6
4.050	2.310	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	11.6	4.21	19	6725	15352	2.31	2.28
1.530	1.090	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	8.0	0.00	2	1200	1296	1.09	1.08
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 232.60	%CHG: -0.01	99	232232	411823		
2.950	2.700	JORDAN INSURANCE	5.45	1.00	1	1000	2750	2.70	2.75
2.310	2.310	UNITED INSURANCE	9.0	0.00	2	12000	27720	2.31	2.31
2.350	2.150	GENERAL ARAB INSUR.	14.0	7.09	2	2300	5405	2.35	2.35
2.100	1.500	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	15.6	7.50	4	1600	3197	1.97	2.00
6.170	3.150	ALYSEE AL-ARABI	15.1	0.00	2	500	1600	3.15	3.20
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 116.99	%CHG: +1.02	11	17400	46672		
2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.21	23	33630	64568	1.92	1.92
6.100	3.550	ARAB TEL. HOTELS	13.2	4.67	2	210	896	4.08	4.28
1.150	0.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9.0	0.00	1	250	263	1.08	1.05
1.010	0.820	REAL ESTATE INV.	13.4	6.19	1	250	243	0.93	0.97
1.680	1.150	KID. EAST HOTELS	18.9	0.00	1	150	186	1.23	1.24
4.000	2.890	ARAB TEL. INV. EDUC.	10.3	0.00	3	4880	19237	3.95	3.94
2.230	1.630	UNITED CP.	8.0	6.55	1	250	420	1.69	1.68
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 112.67	%CHG: +1.02	32	39620	85812		
1.160	0.930	ATTACHEES	9.0	0.00	3	1093	1268	1.16	1.16
4.450	2.850	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.6	3.97	12	6050	16746	2.85	2.77
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.47	2	70	735	10.50	10.50
6.700	4.500	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.47	2	70	735	10.50	10.50
7.000	5.800	JOR. WOODST. MILLS	10.4	3.10	3	750	4865	6.48	6.45
4.700	3.440	ARAB PAPER. MANF.	11.4	4.82	6	13050	54268	4.16	4.15
2.200	1.940	JORDAN BAKRY	9.5	8.54	2	1200	3376	2.81	2.82
1.650	1.020	JOR. PIPES MANFCT.	16.6	5.97	2	500	670	1.34	1.34
1.430	1.050	NATL. INDUSTRIES	9.0	0.00	1	100	128	1.30	1.28
6.000	4.000	DAR ALADNA. DV. INV.	14.0	0.00	4	1050	6005	5.75	5.70
3.850	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.3	9.26	8	2850	7464	2.65	2.70
650	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	11	8000	3680	4.7	4.6
1.270	0.700	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9.0	0.00	1	500	350	0.70	0.70
1.770	0.510	NATIONAL TRDS.	9.0	0.00	15	22300	13420	0.60	0.61
1.150	0.410	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9.0	0.00	4	2150	912	0.43	0.42
4.770	4.370	JOR. CHEM. INDOS.	19.6	4.17	1	250	1200	4.57	4.80
860	530	JOR. REFRIG. INDOS.	9.0	0.00	4	500	285	0.57	0.57
4.610	2.700	ALADIN CO.	25.2	2.67	1	250	750	3.00	3.00
3.000	1.160	NATL. CABLE WIRE. MFAC	30.8	0.00	4	274	346	1.28	1.28
890	530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	9.0	0.00	3	283427	170056	0.60	0.60
1.610	1.160	ARAB PHARM. IND.	15.2	0.00	2	1100	4608	1.19	1.19
1.800	820	UNIV. MOD. INDOS.	2.25	7.25	7	2650	2202	0.86	0.87
1.410	0.690	JOR. INDOS. RESOURCES	10.6	12.66	55	46750	36588	0.79	0.79
1.420	1.320	NATL. CHEMIS.	14.0	4.73	1	500	740	1.47	1.48

1997 — The year of kids in world sport

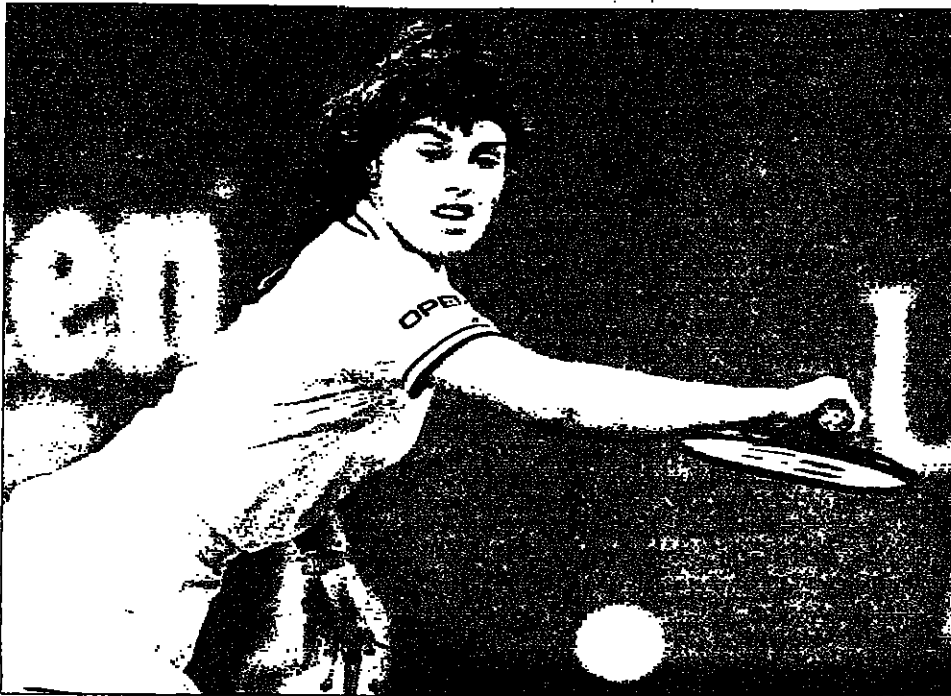
PARIS (AFP) — Ronaldo, Tiger Woods, Martina Hingis, Jan Ullrich, Tara Lipinski were at the forefront, but whichever sport you turned to this year the trend seemed to be the same — 1997 was the year of the kids.

Pele might have won the World Cup as a 17-year-old in 1958 but he was breaking the mould. Four decades later it's the older generation that is out of step as the youngsters flood the scene.

The 21-year-old Luiz de Lima Ronaldo, whose shaved head has robbed skinheads of their most threatening emblem, showed he was as enterprising off the pitch as on it as he negotiated a world record \$30 million transfer from Spanish side Barcelona to Italian club Inter Milan.

But even he admits his biggest test lies ahead. "If we don't win the World Cup next year then anything I've won so far counts for nothing," said the Brazilian who shies away from the new Pele label.

Tiger Woods, another 21-



World No. 1 Martina Hingis

U.S. Open.

If Hingis had not been away from the game for three weeks after falling off her horse then Croatian Iva Majoli would probably not have won the French Open

when they won their first Tours de France and Ullrich admits the biggest challenge lies ahead — winning again.

That's something he could learn from the calm, composed Pete Sampras who has reigned over men's tennis for five successive years and now cuts a senior figure at the grand old age of 26.

But even Sampras has a flaw — as exposed at the French Open again this year — although he is determined to master the Parisian red clay next year.

Jacques Villeneuve, who won the Formula One motor racing title in spite of German Michael Schumacher's attempted broadside at Jerez in Spain in October, is another oldie at 26.

China's teenagers are pulling the world's biggest country out of the doldrums it has been in since seven swimmers were among 11 Chinese to fail drug tests at the Hiroshima Asian Games in 1994 after winning 12 of the 16 titles at the 1994 world championships in Rome.

Sixteen-year-old Chen Yan set a women's 400m individual medley record, the oldest in swimming, and Wu Yanyan, 18, smashed the 200m individual medley in October.

And to try to stop the tongues wagging before the world championships in Perth in January, Yang Tianle of the Chinese Olympic Committee's Medical Commission, said doping controls had been greatly increased in 1997.

However, Olympic champion Le Jingyi, feeling her age at 22, will only compete in relay events at Perth.

Le, who won China's only swimming gold medal in

Atlanta in the 100m freestyle, is troubled by her creaking elbows.

The search for the real senior citizens, though, takes us to boxing where a succession of elderly men — 49-year-old George Foreman, 46-year-old Roberto Duran, 47-year-old Larry Holmes and 40-year-old Sugar Ray Leonard tried painfully, and sometimes embarrassingly, to roll back the years.

Pride of place went to Evander Holyfield, who at 35 not only matched Muhammad Ali's feat of winning the heavyweight world title three times but also survived Mike Tyson's astonishing assault.



Michael Jordan

Tyson, once the most feared man in boxing, may never be seen in the ring again after biting chunks out of Holyfield's ears on an unbelievable night at Las Vegas in June.

Tyson's tale of woe is a lesson for the younger generation. He became boxing's youngest world heavyweight champion as a 20-year-old in 1986 but after a series of scrapes with the law he was convicted of rape in 1992, two years after losing his invincible record to James Buster Douglas in Tokyo.

Michael Jordan proved his enduring quality with a fifth NBA basketball title with the Chicago Bulls, while New Zealand and Germany provided yet more proof that in team sports they are always in contention.

Germany, whose clubs Borussia Dortmund and Schalke 04 won the European Champions and UEFA Cups, are being tipped to reach their fifth World Cup final in seven tournaments in France next year.

Ronaldo's Brazil look the most likely opponents at the new Stade de France on July 12 after the first tournament with 32 teams opened up the possibility for Croatia, Jamaica, Japan and South Africa to make their World Cup debuts.

New Zealand may have missed out on winning 12 out of 12 Tests when England held them to a 26-26 draw at Twickenham in December but they are the yardstick by which any



Brazilian soccer star Ronaldo holds the 'Golden Ball' award as Europe's best player. The 21-year-old Ronaldo is the youngest player and the first South American ever to win the European award (AP Photo)

ment of transfer fees for out-of-contract players in European Union countries.

European clubs, with the possible European Super League in their sights, are keen to follow the example of British clubs who have gone public over the past few years, most notably English champions Manchester United, who have become one of Britain's 250 biggest quoted companies since being floated in 1991.

However, the English soccer boom could bust unless it tackles the problem of the soaring wages paid to the likes of Chelsea's Italian Gianfranco Zola and Colombian Faustino Asprilla of Newcastle.

FIFA, soccer's governing body, is also awash with cash and outgoing FIFA president Joao Havelange prides himself in declaring he will leave four billion dollars from TV and marketing deals to his successor, probably European football Union president Lennart Johansson.

However, not everybody appears to be happy with the way the TV and marketing deals were struck and more wrangling looks likely over whether the German firm which won the rights for the 2002 and 2006 World Cups will be able to sell on those rights to pay television.

The one competition TV viewers will be watching next February is Tara Lipinski, a 4-foot-8in (1.42m), 76-pound (34kg) dynamo from Sugarland, Texas, up against fellow American Michelle Kwan for the Nagano Olympic gold medal.

The 14-year-old Lipinski became the youngest ever women's figure skating world champion in March and Kwan is determined to show she is not washed up at 16.

She could take heart from Carl Lewis who reigned supreme as the world's outstanding track and field athlete for 16 years.

The nine-times Olympic champion decided to call it a day this year.

Some of the decade's other big stars have followed him.

Germany's Boris Becker, who won the first of his three Wimbledon titles as a 17-year-old, five-times Tour de France winner Miguel Indurain, five-times alpine skiing World Cup winner Marc Girardelli and enigmatic Eric Cantona, the French player who spurred Manchester United fans into

learning the French national anthem, have all conceded defeat to Father Time.

The clock finally caught up with Britain's former dual 1500 metres Olympic champion Sebastian Coe when he lost his 16-year-old world 800 metres record to Wilson Kipketer, a 24-year-old Kenyan-born Dane.

Another man conceding

dollar stock market flotation, a 10-year reprieve from the clamp-down on tobacco sponsorship.

More second thoughts came from the International Olympic Committee, which voted to give the 2004 Olympics to Athens, eight years after the Greeks were snubbed for the 1996 Centenary Games in favour



Venus Williams

defeat was British Prime Minister Tony Blair who decided to give Formula One motor racing, struggling with a planned billion

of Atlanta. How many of the 1997 starlets will be going back to the cradle of sport in seven years' time?



Pete Sampras



Formula 1 Champion Jacques Villeneuve

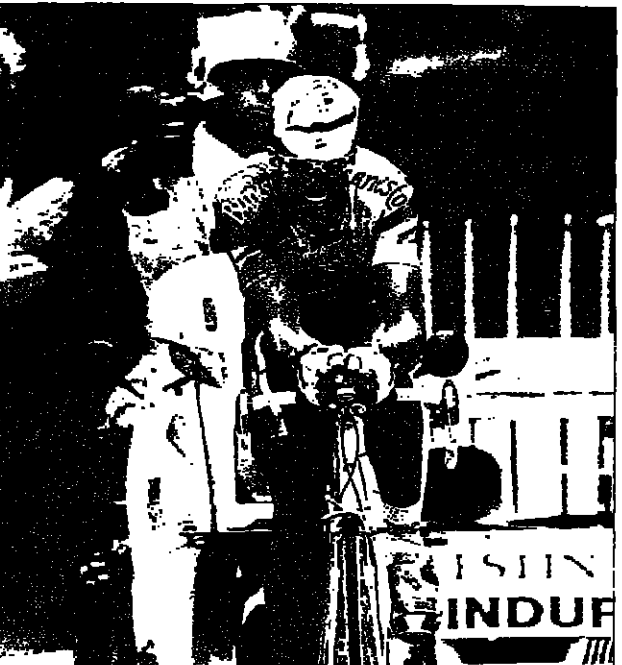
year-old whose talents have secured astonishing wealth — a reported \$40 million from his sports equipment suppliers — became the youngest player, and first black to win the U.S. Masters.

After the rest of his season fell away he decided to re-arrange his playing schedule next season to become more consistent.

Martina Hingis of Switzerland, who became the youngest Grand Slam champion this century when she won the Australian Open as a 16-year-old, also won at Wimbledon and the

in June. And with Steffi Graf's knee seemingly proving an increasingly bigger handicap the biggest challenge should come from her own teenage classes — black American Venus Williams, no shrinking violet, and pin-up Russian Anna Kournikova.

Jan Ullrich might be a product of the old East German sports factory but his boyish, freckled face bears no resemblance to the grim athletes of DDR repute. Jacques Anquetil, Eddy Merckx and Bernard Hinault were also only 23



Two of the greats who retired in 1997 — Miguel Indurain (left) and Boris Becker



other rugby tam can be measured.

And in 21-year-old full-back Christian Cullen they have found another explosive talent to put beside Jonah Lomu, who returned from almost a year on the sidelines with a kidney illness.

Rugby union, being towed along by New Zealand and a resurgent South Africa, is only in its second year as a professional sport.

Soccer, which only 30 years ago needed a legal challenge in the British courts to break the maximum wage, is being transformed by television money, stock market flotations, marketing men and Belgian Jean-Marc Bosman's landmark European Court of Justice ruling. Bosman's doggedness ended the pay-

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 631144	CINEMA TEL: 631141	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 677420
	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Bisham Yanes Theatre
	George Clooney & Nicole Kidman ... in	Mickey Rourke & Angie Everhart ... in	Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi ... in	Julia Roberts & Mel Gibson ... in	ABDOUN WALT DISNEY'S	ABDOUN Harrison Ford ... in	NOW ON DAILY
	THE PEACEMAKER	ANOTHER 9-1/2 WEEKS	AL MASEER (Arabic)	CONSPIRACY THEORY	GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE	AIR FORCE ONE	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas
			Winner in the 1997 Cannes festival	MURDER 1600			For reservations call: 640155, 625155
				MR. BEAN			

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Hide to do community service

NORWICH (AFP) — World heavyweight boxing champion Herbie Hide on Monday was ordered to carry out 60 hours of community service after admitting using threatening behaviour towards two police officers. Norwich Magistrates heard that Hide, who regained the World Boxing Organisation version of the heavyweight crown in June, threw a punch at a policewoman which missed.

Fernandez out of Australian Open

MELBOURNE (AFP) — American Mary Joe Fernandez has dropped out of the Australian Open and a warmup tournament because of a wrist injury. Tournament organisers said Tuesday. Fernandez, who is ranked 11 in the world, is a two-time runner-up in the Australian Open. She lost to Steffi Graf in 1990 and Monica Seles in 1992. Graf and Seles, who have won eight Australian titles between them, are expected in Melbourne for the Open. Seles is undefeated in the Australian championships. Graf is making a comeback after knee surgery and will make her return to Grand Slam competition during the Australian Open. Also expected in Melbourne next month are defending champion Martina Hingis and American Venus Williams, who fell to Hingis in this year's U.S. Open.

Maradona misses handwriting test

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — Diego Maradona on Monday failed to turn up for a handwriting test in connection with his positive drugs test in August. The 37-year-old former World Cup star had been ordered to provide a sample of his signature to confirm that he had signed the drug test form when he gave the positive sample. Maradona managed to avoid a third drugs ban in September after a judge lifted a ban on him amid doubts that the urine sample was his.

Porto score 7-goal thriller

LISBON (AFP) — Porto shook off a dogged challenge from third-from-bottom Boavista in a local derby only six minutes from time to stay six points clear at the top of the Portuguese first division on Monday night.

Knicks defeat Mavericks; Jazz, Suns win

NEW YORK (AP) — Patrick Ewing's absence seemed inspirational, Don Nelson's return was inconsequential and Dallas was simply dreadful as the New York Knicks defeated the Mavericks 79-67 Monday night.

Playing their first game since Ewing's season-ending wrist injury, the Knicks came out with hustle, aggression and a surprisingly strong inside game. Larry Johnson had 18 points and eight rebounds, making six of his eight baskets from in close, and Allan Houston had a team-high 19 points.

Dallas lost its ninth straight and 21st in its last 23 games.

There was only a smattering of boos when Nelson, who was fired by the Knicks in March 1996, was introduced before the game as the Mavs coach.

• **Charlotte Hornets 81, Toronto Raptors 79:** In Charlotte, North Carolina, Glen Rice made up for a sub-par performance with a tip-in at the buzzer that lifted the Charlotte Hornets over the Toronto Raptors.

Rice, who came in as the National Basketball Association's fifth-leading scorer with a 22.4 average, missed 11 of his 17 field-goal attempts before tipping in a miss by Dell Curry.

Rice wound up with 18 points to complete Charlotte's comeback from a 12-point deficit and help the Hornets send the Raptors to their 11th loss in 12 road games. Damon Stoudamire had 21 points and five assists for Toronto.

• **New Jersey Nets 99, Orlando Magic 88:** In Orlando, Florida, Sam Cassell had 28 points, six assists and five steals to lead the New Jersey Nets over the Orlando Magic.

Cassell and rookie Keith Van Horn sparked a decisive 13-0 run that started at the end of the third quarter. Kendall Gill scored 18 points for New Jersey, while Van Horn finished with 16. Mark Price led the Magic with 23 points and seven assists.

• **Detroit Pistons 96, Philadelphia 76ers 92:** In Philadelphia, Grant Hill had 22 points, 10 rebounds, eight assists and three blocks, and the Detroit Pistons overcame a 21-point, second-half deficit to beat the Philadelphia 76ers.

Jerry Stackhouse, traded from Philadelphia to Detroit last week, scored 17 points and made a key block against Tim Thomas with 6.4 seconds left. Joe Dumars then hit two free throws to clinch it for Detroit, which trailed 55-34 early in the third period and still was behind by 15 going into the final period.

Brian Williams and Lindsay Hunter also scored 17 points for Detroit, who snapped a four-game road losing streak and beat the 76ers for the second time in three nights. Derrick Coleman led Philadelphia with 23 points and eight rebounds.

• **Utah Jazz 101, Atlanta Hawks 99:** In Atlanta, Karl Malone scored 27 points, including a clinching jumper with 32.6 seconds remaining, and the Utah Jazz handed the Atlanta Hawks their third straight loss.



Los Angeles Lakers' Kobe Bryant (L) goes under Houston Rockets' Charles Barkley for two first half points, December 22. The Rockets were hosting the Lakers at the Compaq Center in Houston (Reuters photo)

Malone, leading the Jazz in scoring for the 25th consecutive game, had 11 points in the fourth quarter as Utah held off Atlanta.

Christian Laettner led the Hawks with 20 points.

• **Washington Wizards 110, Milwaukee Bucks 79:** In Milwaukee, Juwan Howard scored 25 points and Chris Webber added 23 as the Washington Wizards extended their season-high winning streak to five games.

Rod Strickland added 19 points and 10 assists for Washington.

Glenn Robinson paced the Bucks with 22 points.

• **Los Angeles Lakers 94, Houston Rockets 83:** In Houston, Kobe Bryant scored 19 points and Eddie Jones had nine of his 17 points in an early third-quarter charge that helped the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Houston Rockets.

The Lakers beat the rockets for the third straight time this season. The Lakers won in double overtime 126-115 on Nov. 12 and snapped Houston's nine-game winning streak with a 119-102 victory on Dec. 12.

Clyde Drexler led the Rockets with 17 points. Charles Barkley had 21 rebounds and 14 points for Houston, which shot only 38.5 percent from the field.

• **Phoenix Suns 91, Golden State Warriors 76:** In Phoenix, Cedric Ceballos scored 11 of his

17 points in the fourth quarter as the Phoenix Suns beat the Golden State Warriors.

Antonio McDyess also scored 17 points for the Suns, who won their third straight and fifth in a row over the Warriors. Jason Kidd narrowly missed a triple-double with 10 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds for Phoenix.

Tony Delk scored 15 points for golden state, and Joe Smith added 13. Erick Dampier, making his first start at center because of Donyell Marshall's pulled hamstring, had 11 points, 12 rebounds and six assists for the Warriors.

• **Sacramento Kings 89, Minnesota Timberwolves 79:** In Sacramento, Mitch Richmond scored 27 points and the Sacramento Kings rallied in the second half to defeat the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Billy Owens made a pair of jumpers and a dunk, igniting an 8-0 run that gave Sacramento a 75-66 lead with 7:03 remaining. The Timberwolves never got closer than five points the rest of the way.

Rookie Michael Stewart scored a career-high 13 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and blocked four shots for Sacramento, which has won four of its last five home games.

Tom Gugliotta scored 19 points for the Timberwolves, who led 42-35 at halftime.

Olympic flame arrives in Japan

TOKYO (AFP) — The Olympic flame lit last week in Greece arrived in Japan Tuesday for next February's Nagano Winter Games, an airport spokesman said.

A JAL charter flight carrying the symbolic flame that will burn throughout the games arrived at Narita Airport east of Tokyo at 8:22 a.m. (2322 GMT Monday). A Japanese delegation of 330 including Nagano Mayor Tasuku Tsukada accompanied the flame.

The Olympic flame was

kindled Friday in a ceremony at the Greek temple sanctuary of Olympia, the site of the ancient Olympic games.

The flame will be delivered to the official residence of Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto later in the day.

"Once the flame is in Japan, it will certainly kindle the hearts of all of the people throughout the country," said Makoto Kobayashi, the head of the Nagano Olympic Organising Committee (NAOC), when the flame was first

lit Friday.

The flame will be on display in Tokyo until January 6 when the Olympic torch relay gets under way in the northern island of Hokkaido, at Kagoshima on the southwestern island of Kyushu and on the southernmost island of Okinawa.

A month-long journey along three routes will pass through all 47 prefectures in Japan.

"This is the realization of a dream that began with our bid years ago," said Shoichi Washizawa, a

senior official from the Nagano chamber of commerce.

Japan's figure skating champion Midori Ito will light the Olympic cauldron that will burn throughout the February 7-22 Games in Nagano, central Japan. The event is expected to be the largest Winter Games, with a record 71 countries attending.

The games are the third Olympics to be held in Japan, after the Tokyo Games in 1964 and the Sapporo Winter Games in 1972.

Patriots beat Miami for home edge

MIAMI (AFP) — Dave Meggett and Marrio Grier each ran for touchdowns and New England's defense denied Miami in the last minutes for a 14-12 victory Monday in American football's regular season finale.

The triumph means New England will play host to Miami next Sunday in a first-round National Football League playoff game at chilly Foxboro, Massachusetts, rather than return here to warm but unfriendly conditions.

The Patriots made their first season sweep of Miami since 1988 and made the Dolphins' path to an NFL title an all-road affair. The Dolphins have not won a playoff game away from Miami since 1974, going 0-5.

The Patriots, losers to Green Bay last January in the Super Bowl, have proven they still have a title contender despite losing coach Bill Parcells and much of his staff to the New York Jets this season.

Miami led 6-0 at half-time but fell behind 14-6 on the two Patriot touchdown runs.

Dan Marino threw a four-yard touchdown pass to Lamar Thomas with 3:46 to play and Miami appeared to have equalized on a two-point conversion run by Karim Abdul-Jabbar.

Marino has made 43 fourth-quarter victory rallies, the most of any NFL quarterback. But he could not pull off another, being sacked and throwing an interception to Lawyer Milloy with 1:18 to play to end Miami's final true threat.



Swedish boat Swedish Match sails towards the Sydney Opera House (R) to finish second in the 2,250 nautical miles third leg from Fremantle to Sydney in the Whitbread Round the World Race December 23. Another Swedish boat, EF Language, finished only one mile ahead to win the leg, making it the closest finish ever seen in the 25-year history of the race. EF Language is now overall leader ahead of Norway's Innovation Kvaerner (Reuters photo)

Floodlight jinx strikes again in Premiership

LONDON (AFP) — Wimbledon chairman Sam Hamman and Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger called for action from the English football authorities on Monday after their sides' Premiership match at Selhurst Park was abandoned due to floodlight failure.

The match was called off

after 46 minutes with the score at 0-0 and will be replayed at a later date. No points were awarded.

It was the third Premiership match to be disrupted this season. Derby's game against Wimbledon at Pride Park in August and West Ham's clash with Crystal Palace in early November both fell foul to

floodlight failure and were postponed.

"I believe it is time for the Premier League to act and act decisively," said Hamman. "This shouldn't be happening. The Premier League is the most powerful league in the world and we have to make sure there is enough back-up power."

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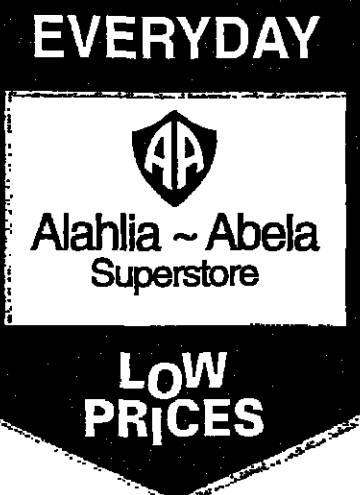
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Defiance plane with aid to Iraq held up in Iran

MOSCOW (AFP) — A bid by ultra-nationalist Russian deputy Vladimir Zhirinovskiy to break U.N. sanctions by flying "humanitarian aid" for Iraqi children into Baghdad has been held up by Iran, an aide to the Russian politician said Tuesday.

The Russian TU-154 [aircraft] is currently held up at Kermanshah [western Iran], said Alexander Novikov. The plane was carrying a delegation of around 20 people, he added.

"Negotiations are in progress with the Iranian authorities, who are being fairly conciliatory," he said, adding he hoped a solution to the problem would be found quickly.

The foreign ministry in Tehran later said the shipment could go ahead as long as it travelled overland.

He said the Tupolev was carrying "medicines for Iraqi children. It is a humanitarian flight and not commercial. It does not break the international

embargo, and I think everything will go off fine."

Since 1990 only U.N. aircraft and a few transport planes carrying food and medicine have been allowed to land in Iraq. The transport planes, from Switzerland, Sudan and Pakistan, have all used Habbaniyah airfield west of Baghdad.

All Iraqi officials and non-U.N. visitors are obliged to travel to and from the country by land via Jordan.

During a number of visits to Iraq, Mr. Zhirinovskiy,

who heads Russia's far-right Liberal Democratic Party, has strongly criticised the sanctions imposed on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Mr. Zhirinovskiy, known for his extreme views on race and Russian nationalism, regularly courts controversy.

Earlier this month met his "great friend," Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, during a trip to Iraq where he slammed U.N. sanctions on Iraq.

U.S. 'blackmailing' U.N. Security Council — Aziz

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq accused the United States on Tuesday of "blackmailing" the U.N. Security Council and manipulating the U.N. Commission (UNSCOM) on disarmament to prolong economic sanctions.

Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz said a Security Council declaration on Monday urging Iraq to give U.N. weapons inspectors immediate and unconditional access to so-called presidential sites was the result of U.S. pressure.

"The declaration Monday from the Security Council was the result, once again, of blackmail by the United States, which is pressuring the Council to adopt non-objective and unbalanced [positions]," Mr. Aziz said.

In an apparent appeal to China, France and Russia, which have advocated dialogue to resolve the current crisis, Mr. Aziz urged the Security Council "to adopt an objective and balanced position and act to remove the embargo."

In a statement on Monday, the Security Council described as "unacceptable and a clear violation of the relevant resolutions" Iraq's refusal to open up presidential sites to UNSCOM weapons experts.

Iraq and the Security Council have been deadlocked over whether UNSCOM arms inspectors will be permitted access to presidential sites which Baghdad calls essential to its national security and sovereignty.

UNSCOM Chief Richard Butler, an Australian, has charged that Iraq has concealed elements of weapons of mass destruction at sites declared off-limits to inspectors, a charge Baghdad has staunchly denied.

Monday's declaration was adopted unanimously by the 15-member Security Council, but the text was modified to eliminate a "condemnation" of Baghdad contained in the wording of an earlier version.

An oil embargo in force since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait cannot be lifted until UNSCOM reports that Iraq no longer has the capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Aziz, quoted by the official INA news agency, said Tuesday that the United States was using UNSCOM to "divert attention from the main question, which is the lifting of the unfair embargo."

He reiterated charges that the disarmament body "is controlled by the United States and carries out its policies" and called for a restructuring of UNSCOM.

"UNSCOM carried out 119 inspections between early 1996 and July 1997 and its inspector of U.S. nationality, Scott Ritter, carried out 14 inspections during the past few days and did not find anything prohibited," Mr. Aziz said.

"The Security Council should question UNSCOM about the sources supplying it with stupid information and lies," the Iraqi deputy premier added.

The Iraqi authorities have stepped up a campaign against Mr. Ritter during the past few days, accusing him of being an American spy.

Bill Richardson, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, welcomed Monday's Security Council declaration calling it "a very strong statement, sending an unmistakable signal to Iraq to comply with the U.N. resolutions."

"It's been unanimous, it's been strong, it's been swift," he said. "We want to resolve this issue diplomatically through the U.N., but we are not going to rule out any other option."

Farrakhan criticises peace process, denies anti-Semitism

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Controversial U.S. Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan attacked his government's sponsorship of the Middle East peace process at a news conference here Monday.

U.S. President Bill Clinton was surrounded by advisors who were Israeli agents, Mr. Farrakhan said, adding that the U.S. could not be a just partner in the Middle East while it preferred Israelis to Arabs.

He denied that he had ever said he hated Jews and insisted that he respected them.

He added that he had not even said that Jews hated black people, merely that they exploited them.

Mr. Farrakhan had planned to pray at Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, during a visit to the Palestinian territories earlier this month.

He said it was not the Israeli authorities that had prevented him but threats of attack from a Jewish extremist group.

He said that the message that he wanted to get through to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was that Jerusalem was an occupied city and that history taught that none of its successive occupiers had managed to keep hold of it by force.

Mr. Farrakhan also criticised his government's policy towards Libya, which has been under an international air embargo since 1992 for refusing to extradite two Libyan suspects in the Dec. 21, 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

He said he did not agree with his government's policy and was prepared to make sacrifices to speak the truth.

Earlier, the U.S. State Department blasted Mr. Farrakhan for paying a visit to Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi on the anniversary of the bombing Sunday.

"It was really a stupefying timing, if you will: the idea that he would be there actually on the very date of the anniversary of the downing of Pan Am 103," State Department deputy spokesman James Foley said.

Italian FM deplores EU treatment of Turkey

BONN (AFP) — Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini has expressed dissatisfaction with the European Union attitude towards Turkey, arguing that the EU has neglected its geo-political interests by ruling the country out of the bloc's enlargement plans.

In an article in Tuesday's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Mr. Dini said that "although the [Luxembourg] summit reaffirmed Turkey's European calling, it would have been better to include it in the enlargement process," which would have avoided "the feeling of discrimination."



BLUE SANTA: Visitors are dwarfed by a giant blue Santa Claus on display at the Tokyo's popular Daiba bay area Tuesday. A six-metre tall rubber made Santa is painted blue reflecting a literal blue as sea to entertain many visitors during this year's holiday season (AP photo)

Palestinians protest against Israeli release of murderer

RAMALLAH (AFP) — The Palestinians, protesting on Tuesday to the United States against Israel's release on bail of a Jewish settler who beat to death a 10-year-old Palestinian boy, an official said.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeed Erakat said he sent the message to U.S. envoy Dennis Ross asking for "immediate U.S. intervention" to stop the release of the settler, Nahum Korman.

"The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu must stop this revolving door policy because it only encourages Jewish terrorists," Mr. Erakat told AFP.

Korman, security chief at Bitar settlement who was indicted in October 1996

for killing a 10-year-old Palestinian boy, was released on bail a month ago with a caution not to enter the West Bank, Israeli police sources said.

He still faces charges, the sources said, but has yet to go on trial, more than a year after allegedly beating to death the boy, Hilmi Shusha, in the village of Husan, outside Bethlehem.

The Palestinian complaint comes as Mr. Netanyahu has reportedly refused to approve a security accord with the Palestinians because it would call on Israel to crack down on armed Jewish radicals, particularly those who have killed Palestinians.

The security deal, brokered by the U.S. and

approved by the Palestinians, would commit both Israel and the Palestinians to take action against armed militants among their respective populations.

Mr. Netanyahu wants the deal to detail specific steps for the Palestinians to take in suppressing Islamist activists, but has rejected "equating" Jewish militants with members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the Israeli daily Jerusalem Post said Tuesday.

He has also repeatedly accused the Palestinian National Authority of a "revolving door" policy towards armed militants, saying it arrests them and then releases them a short time later.

Somali warlords will have to agree on balance of power — observers

NAIROBI (AFP) — Somali warlords who signed a "historic" reconciliation pact in Cairo will have to agree on a delicate balance of power at a meeting in February if they are to end seven years of clan warfare, observers said Tuesday.

They will also have to agree on a legal framework, with Islamists pressing for the adoption of Sharia law, which is in force in some fiefdoms but rejected in others.

The weekend agreement, after 41 days of talks, was unprecedented in the detail of its blueprint for setting up a federal state and a transitional government, and for the number of faction leaders it brought together.

But at least 11 major peace agreements have been signed since the overthrow of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in January 1991 after a bloody civil war, with the ink hardly having time to dry before the fighting resumed.

The key, Somali observers say, will be the amount of power given to the main faction leaders.

Sources close to the Cairo meeting said it was likely that the president would come from the Hawiye clan, the prime minister from the Darod, and the speaker of parliament from the Rahanwein.

That immediately poses a major problem, as the two

principal warlords, Hussein Mohammad Aided, based in south Mogadishu, and Ali Mahdi Mohammad, the strongman of north Mogadishu, are both members of the Hawiye clan.

Both have claimed so far to be "interim president of Somalia," and both will have to be accommodated if the agreement is to stick, the observers said.

Mr. Aided, 36, a member of the Habr Gedir subclan of the Hawiye, moved to the United States as a teenager with his mother, spending 16 years there, and served in Somalia in 1993 with the U.S. marines. He inherited the leadership of his faction after the death of his father, General Mohammad Farah Aided, from battle wounds in August last year.

Mr. Ali Mahdi, 59, of the Abgal subclan of the Hawiye, was an opposition member of parliament in the civilian regime overthrown by Siad Barre, and owned one of Mogadishu's biggest hotels. It was destroyed by General Aided's militiamen. Mr. Ali Mahdi has managed to keep his power dry in recent years, keeping his militiamen out of the worst of the fighting. The next conference, where the power-sharing details will be thrashed out, will, in principle, be held in Balda, northwest

of Mogadishu, starting on Feb. 15.

That town, which became renowned in 1993 as "the city of death" during a famine which provoked Western and U.N. military intervention to protect aid convoys, has been fought over for the past two years by Mr. Aided's militia-men and the Rahanwein Resistance Army.

"The factions are well known for signing agreements and not implementing them. Omer Moa'lin, who was one of Mr. Ali Mahdi's "vice presidents" in 1991, told AFP Tuesday in Nairobi.

"But if they are serious," he said, "maybe it will not be difficult to democratise their accord."

The only peace agreement so far that has stuck is one signed in 1993 by Mr. Aided's faction and the rival Somali Salvation Democratic Front to pacify the central town of Galkayo.

The Cairo meeting brought Mr. Aided face-to-face with rival warlords grouped in the 26-faction National Salvation Council, but two members of the group's five-strong presidential council, Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmad and General Aden Abdullahi Nur "Gabyow," left Cairo last Friday and declared in Addis Ababa that they rejected the agreement.

Israel ushers in Hanukkah with pyramid pile of jelly doughnuts

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israelis ushered in Hanukkah, or the Jewish festival of lights, on Tuesday with a pyramid of 6,400 jelly doughnuts and a 66-foot-tall menorah, or eight-armed candelabra.

The eight-day holiday begins at sundown Tuesday and commemorates a military victory two millennia ago. Traditionally, each household lights candles, adding one each night.

Although not considered a major Jewish holiday, Hanukkah's proximity to Christmas has given it a higher profile, and the custom of gift-giving is becoming more common.

A candle-lighting ceremony at President Ezer Weizman's residence on Tuesday evening was also designated as the first event in Israel's yearlong celebrations marking its 50th anniversary this spring.

Leaders of more than 30 nations, including U.S. President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, joined in lighting Hanukkah candles in honour of the anniversary. "May the candles of the light our way to a true and lasting peace," Mr. Clinton said in his holiday message.

33rd Zionist Congress opens Tuesday in Jerusalem

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Hundreds of Jewish leaders from around the world were due to open the 33rd Zionist Congress Tuesday in occupied Jerusalem in the presence of Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The congress, which brings together 750 delegates from the Jewish diaspora and 190 representatives from Israel, will debate matters relating to Jewish education and immigration absorption and elect leaders to key positions in world Jewish organisations, organisers said.

The congress normally meets every four years and should have been held in 1996 but was pushed back to this year to coincide with

the 100th anniversary of the first Zionist convention in Switzerland and the 50th anniversary of Israel's creation, which falls in May.

Participants will elect officials for key positions in the Jewish Agency, which oversees immigration to Israel, the Jewish National Fund and the World Zionist Organisation. Under a rotation agreement between Israel's governing Likud bloc and the opposition Labour Party, the prestigious post of Jewish Agency chairman is to remain in the hands of Labour member Avraham Burg for two more years.

It will then be given to Likud official Salai Meridor, brother of former finance minister Dan Meridor.

launched with two attempts to get into the Guinness Book of Records, including one in which 6,400 jelly doughnuts, a favourite holiday food, were piled up in a pyramid.

Sponsored by a food store chain near the northern town of Afula, the 3.5-metre tall blob was to be dismantled later, with the doughnuts to be distributed to Israeli soldiers serving along the border with Lebanon.

Another try for a Guinness entry was made by the orthodox Habad movement which erected a 20 metres tall menorah made of metal pipes in the Ayalon Valley in central Israel. The menorah, which Habad claims is the tallest ever, will be lit each night by using a crane.

Baby, what a coincidence

LONDON (AFP) — A family whose grandmother was born on the 11th of the 11th, mother on the 10th of the 10th, father on the fourth of the fourth, and son on the sixth of the sixth are celebrating the birth of a baby girl — at 12.12 P.M. on the 12th of the 12th. Several newspapers carried reports of the Beard family from Gosport on the south coast of England and their latest addition Emily. Father David, 33, said: "My friends started calling me Weir'd Beard. We're not having any more children after this."

Welshman created 'innovation' in Aboriginal art

SYDNEY (AFP) — In the latest scandal to hit Australian Aboriginal art, a prominent indigenous artist has admitted her Welsh-born ex-husband devised and painted the heart of a prize-winning work, a report said.

Kathleen Petyarre won the \$11,700 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Art Award last year for her work Storm in Atmakere Country II. But she has admitted her former husband Ray Beamish drew the fine white cross that radiated from the painting's centre, which had been considered an innovation in Aboriginal art. "Ray started with the white cross and did all the white dots. I just followed with the yellow dots [the background of the painting]," Petyarre said.

Swiss on record roll in 1997

GENEVA (AFP) — The Swiss, though hardly known for their eccentricity, managed to claim a series of bizarre records in 1997, including the largest pitched snowball battle, and most tenacious pit-bull terrier.

The snowball fight record was set earlier in the year at the up-market ski resort of Klosters, where 658 people turned out to do battle. A more ignominious landmark was provided by the holdup of the century, when an armed gang stole \$35 million from a Zurich post office. A world record for canine tenacity was set by the Swiss pit-bull terrier Kid, who clamped his jaws on a rubber sausage and — and despite being suspended in the air — refused to let go for 84 minutes.

Royal kiss of life saves Swedish Academy member

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — Sweden's Queen Silvia, who turned 54 on Tuesday, was hailed by the Swedish press as a heroine after resuscitating a member of the Swedish Academy who collapsed at a gala dinner.

According to the paper Aftonbladet, the queen was standing next to 79-year-old Sten Rudholm when he suddenly collapsed and fell unconscious. Queen Silvia and Swedish artist Per Waestberg helped to lay Rudholm on the floor. "The queen said she had taken a course in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and took care of Rudholm while I looked for someone to call an ambulance," Waestberg said.

'Posh Spice' to marry footballer boyfriend

LONDON (AFP) — Spice Girl "Posh Spice" and Manchester United footballer David Beckham have decided to marry, after a passionate nine-month romance, it emerged on Tuesday. "Posh Spice," Victoria Adams, 23, said at the premiere of the Spice Girls' movie Spiceworld in Düsseldorf: "My boyfriend is a footballer. We are getting married soon." In comments carried by the British press on Tuesday, she added: "As soon as Gwyneth makes clothes for expectant mums, I would even consider a pregnancy."

Japanese civilian killed

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